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Braidwood finances in the black after 2022 audit

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

With just a little more than two months left in the current fiscal year, the city of Braidwood has presented the final results of the previous year's financial audit to the public.

The results of the audit were reviewed and accepted by the mayor and commissioners last month, after a brief presentation by the audit firm of Wipfli during the Jan. 24 regular meeting of City Council.

Per the audit, the city's overall net position in the 2022 fiscal year (FY22),

which ended on April 30, 2022, was \$36.1 million. The city's total assets across all funds at the end of the fiscal year was \$50.4 million, with liabilities of \$13.4 million.

When it comes to the general fund—the main operating fund for administration and the police department—the city managed to flip the deficit, starting FY22 \$2.6 million in the red, but ending \$1.6 million in the black.

City administrator Tony Altiery said the key to reversing the trend of losing money in the general fund has been conservative budgeting. Revenues collected in FY22 were \$4.5

million, more than \$750,000 higher than the original budget. Meanwhile, general fund expenditures were \$3.3 million, below the projected \$3.6 million the city budgeted to spend last year.

"We brought in \$758,000 more than we planned on," Altiery said. "For sales tax, we only had \$384,000 budgeted, but we actually brought in \$658,000. I went back to when [this administration began], and when we came in we brought in \$400,000 in sales tax a year. So, three years later, we increased the revenues from sales tax to \$658,000. We've also increased state income tax, so did the grants."

Revenues included:

- Property taxes — \$1.2 million, \$11,000 more than budgeted
- State sales tax — \$658,484, \$274,484 more than budgeted
- State Income tax — \$891,344, \$291,344 more than budgeted
- Grants — \$549,551, \$62,340 more than budgeted

Altiery also noted that gaming revenues came in well over budget. The city conservatively estimated \$30,000 in gaming revenue, after the pandemic brought those numbers down. But the actual collected was more than twice that, at \$72,052.

Altiery said the boost in sales tax

was due in part to the city's specialty vehicle dealerships having good years.

"A lot of what happened is, Camping World [bought EZ Living], and they are doing a lot more sales, almost doubling what they were selling prior," Altiery said. "Then, Beaver Creek Golf Carts are bringing in a lot more revenue than they were. They used to sell around one a week in summertime, and now in summer they sell almost one a day. They said it's really gone crazy."

SEE AUDIT, PAGE 2

Ultimate Rides looks to start construction next month

STAFF REPORT

City leaders in Braidwood said the long-awaited construction of a new Ultimate Rides location should soon be underway.

City administrator Tony Altiery reported this week that the specialty car dealership is expected to apply for their building permit this week, with construction currently on track to begin in March.

Altiery said construction of the new site has been hampered over the past two years with high costs and supply chain issues.

In March of last year, the business paid back the city \$121,000, their portion of an agreement that established a final price on the city-owned land sold to the dealer to build the new site on Hickory Street, next to the Sun Motel.

That price included \$7,000 of TIF incentives that the auto shop paid back as part of the overall deal to move to the new location.

The project was first brought to Braidwood in 2020. But, the plans were delayed several times due to issues on both the city's side and the business side, including drainage issues at the site, as well as issues in the automotive industry spawned by the pandemic, including increased online sales and the reconfiguration of automotive assembly lines which have made obtaining vehicles more difficult.

The city first reached an agreement with Ultimate Rides in September 2020. A redevelopment agreement entered into at that time established that the city would purchase 2.6 acres of land along I-55, in the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) III district, for \$114,000, with the amendment for the additional \$7,000 approved in March of 2021.

Surface, Inc.—the parent company of Ultimate Rides—paid back for the cost of land acquisition and payment for any work the city did on the redevelopment property and any other payments the city made to the developer for costs related to the project,

SEE RIDES, PAGE 2

All Dressed Up!



Photo by Marney Simon

DRESSES IN A hardware store? It might not be the typical item you see on display, but these formal gowns at Whitmore Ace Hardware in Braidwood are just a small part of the dresses collected this year for the Melissa's Closet and Crystal's Jewelry Box event. Since 2011, the annual prom dress drive and sale has outfitted more than 4,200 high school students for prom, with dresses available for just \$5 each. The event was created in honor of Melissa Michalowski and Crystal Carr, who were Reed-Custer High School seniors when they were both tragically killed in a car wreck in December 2008. Melissa was an employee at Whitmore Ace Hardware in Braidwood, where she left a mark on her co-workers as a shining star who was always happy to come to work and help people. After considering the high costs of attending prom, the staff decided to host a dress drive in honor of Melissa and Crystal, who never got to attend their prom. In the first year, the collection totaled 120 dresses. Now, the event takes up the entire gymnasium at Godley Park District, with more than 2,000 dresses available. Dresses, shoes and accessories for donation can be dropped off at all 13 Whitmore Ace Hardware locations. Melissa's Closet and Crystal's Jewelry Box takes place on Saturday, March 4 from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. at the Godley Park District gym. More information on the event can be found on the Melissa's Closet and Crystal's Jewelry Box official Facebook page, @MelissaCrystalProm. Proceeds go toward a scholarship fund.

Rossi Field site declared as surplus property

City leaders ready to market land bought 15 years ago

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

A deal to finally develop the vacant property behind Casey's has already fallen through.

But, city leaders said plans to take the empty field, known for years simply as Rossi Field, and turn it into something the city can place on the tax rolls is still in the works.

During a special meeting in January, the City Council approved a measure to declare a portion of city-owned property at 0 Mitchell Street into surplus property. Declaring any city-owned property as surplus clears the way for the city to sell that property.

City administrator Tony Altiery said the effort was sparked by talks with Dollar General to potentially build a new store in Braidwood.

"They didn't want to renew their building lease, so they were going to move out of town," Altiery said. "So, I asked them if they'd be interested in

looking at the city-owned property behind Casey's because it's already zoned business, and they said definitely. But, since it was last minute, they needed to know [quickly]."

Altiery said as they were working on the potential deal, Dollar General was able to work out the kinks with the current building and lease, and decided to stay put.

But, even though this first deal won't come to fruition, Altiery said the time has come for the city to try to market the land for a future buyer, instead of sitting on it.

The purchase of Rossi Field was part of a real estate grab that the city completed in 2007 and 2008.

At that time, the city council approved the purchase of more than a dozen properties, totaling more than five acres, for a combined total of \$2.7 million. Properties included the old Union Block, a handful of properties on Main, Mitchell, Front, and North Streets, Railroad Street, 111 Center Street where the depot museum now sits, and Rossi Field.

Rossi Field was the largest

SEE ROSSI, PAGE 2

Casino Night fundraiser coming to Hog Wild

Fundraising event will benefit RCEA scholarships

STAFF REPORT

The Reed-Custer Education Association will host the inaugural RC Legacy fundraiser event—Casino Night—set to take place on Saturday, Feb. 25 from 7 p.m. until 10 p.m. at Hog Wild in Braidwood.

The event will replace the Reed-Custer Cooks fundraiser.

Casino Night will include Blackjack, Roulette, Poker and Craps tables.

Each year the RCEA provides scholarship dollars to

Reed-Custer High School graduates, which help those students with their post-high school and college expenses. The organization has set a goal this year to raise \$15,000.

Community members who wish to help out can become a monetary sponsor or donate a raffle prize donation of \$100 or more. Winners of the raffle items will be drawn the night of the event.

Tickets for raffles are on sale now, and winners do not need to be present to win.

SEE CASINO, PAGE 3



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Audit

The budget was also bolstered by reigning in spending.

"The police department was under budget by \$53,432," Altiery noted, adding that the department managed to stay on track in salaries, benefits, and pension contributions, while only going slightly above budget in maintenance, equipment, and fuel.

"The hardest place to stay under the budget was probably the police department, because their employees work 24/7, 365 days a year. So, we have to keep employees but also not have too many employees, it's really hard. All police stations are struggling to keep employees, so you have to start paying them a little bit higher wages to keep them here, which then goes up."

The police department's total budget for FY22 was \$2.1 million, but ended the year spending just slightly over \$2 million.

"Overall from when we came in, I looked that up and we were about \$4 million in

the hole," Altiery said. "We don't have any debt except for the sewer plant."

As far as getting the budget in check, Altiery said the majority of work involved was reorganization.

"A lot of it was cleaning up paperwork," he said. "There were less expenditures, but also we had borrowed money against ourselves. So instead of having a loan where your right pocket owes your left pocket \$20, we cleared up that paperwork. That hurts our credit rating, when we owe ourselves money that may or may not be able to get paid back one day. But mainly, we made sure that we didn't have any extra expenditures. Nothing over budget, that was our rule."

When it comes to the city's overall financial position, Altiery said residents should be happy with where the city stands.

"I think it's amazing. Everybody is happy with it, we've stayed within budget."

Altiery said even though budget issues have been an area of contention with the streets department—he and Streets Commissioner Fay Smith have battled publicly over the budget multiple

times over the past four years—even streets ended the year in a decent position.

"Even Fay, he may complain, but he was only over \$60,000. It's not horrible," Altiery said. "What we've done in the last three or four years with streets is, every year that department was over \$50,000. So, we added more money. The streets is probably one of the hardest to budget partly because we don't know if we're getting snow. So, we're guessing. They use 50- to 75-tons of salt every time, so every time they go out to plow it costs about \$7,000 to \$10,000. So, if they go out four times, that's \$40,000. But if they go out 15 times, that's \$150,000. It's tricky to do a budget on the streets, that's why the salt gets paid out of MFT. That way, that's not in the budget, all we have to budget for is overtime and [regular work]."

Altiery also noted that property taxes make up just over one-quarter of the city's overall revenues, which means the city has to rely on a lot of other sources of funding to keep the lights on and things running.

"About 27% of our income is property taxes. That means 73% comes from other

places," he said. "I think the city overall is very happy with the way things are going. Expenditures are in line, we're under budget, we're getting a lot of the equipment that has been needed for the city. I think we're covering every base we can with the problem of higher expenses. The roads were almost triple the price as they were the year before, but they're already going down. So, this year by spring, where we only could have done one mile of road last year, we're going to be able to do three miles of road."

And, the administrator added, some of the city's biggest expenses in FY22 were signs of progress.

"On the overall, we were very happy, especially considering the biggest expenditures were engineering and attorneys," Altiery said. "And that was due to the massive quantities of work needed for the new businesses we have coming in. Ford and Chevy, Ultimate Rides, the truck stop, truck parking, all these are big developments, so that's where the expenses are. And, we still were about one-fourth of what was being spent years before."

Rossi

purchase, at \$600,000. The properties were paid with tax increment financing (TIF) funds from the now-closed TIF I district. At the time, the purchases were part of a plan to revitalize downtown, by potentially adding commercial/retail space and parking.

Altiery said in retrospect, he can't figure out why, or find the correlating paperwork to explain it, the city would spend so much money on those properties, particularly the \$600,000 for the vacant Rossi Field.

"We got an appraisal on it for \$77,000," Altiery said of Rossi Field.

Altiery said the city's best bet, in his estimation, would be to market the entire lot for around \$100,000, well below what the city paid for the property 15 years ago.

"I'm trying to find a business to recoup some of the costs after the city in 2008 spending [\$2.7 million] purchasing this property for business development,"

Altiery said. "I'd like to recoup some of that just to get a business in there, just to start getting some of our money back."

There's little known about the history of the vacant field itself, or why it became known as Rossi Field.

The Rossi family was once a prominent family in the city, with its most prominent business being the Macaroni Factory, built in the 1870s and moved to a new site (now the site of the Golden Mine) in the late 1800s by Peter Rossi, Sr.

Also built in the 1870s on the corner of Main and "B" Street—now Mitchell Street—was the Rossi General Store, where Casey's now sits.

The Rossi family also owned a dance hall, and operated Weitz Cafe, which was later converted into a laundromat before it was demolished in 2022.

The Rossi family also built the currently vacant service station on the corner of Route 129 and Route 113.

In 1951, brothers Peter, Jr. and John Rossi built the Rossi Motel, now the Braidwood Motel.

According to records from the Will

County Recorder of Deeds, it was the estate of Peter S. Rossi that owned Rossi Field until it was sold in 2004 to Kevin Hibler. Real estate agent Michael O'Donnell acquired the property in 2005, and sold it to the city of Braidwood in 2008 for the purchase price of \$600,000.

The Braidwood Area Historical Society has information on all the Rossi owned properties, but the vacant field is not listed in any documents available currently. At one time, a home was on the far southwest corner of the lot, and local residents said they even used the vacant field at one point as a baseball practice field for Reed-Custer High School.

But other than local lore, there isn't much information on the site.

The entirety of the property is 2.46 acres, but the portion declared surplus was about half of that size.

Altiery said the council will likely consider a measure to declare the remainder of the property as surplus, in an effort to finally begin the commercial marketing of the site that was first planned back in 2007 and 2008.

Rides

and now owns the property.

City officials estimate that the new business could bring in \$15,000 to \$25,000 in property taxes based off of other buildings of a similar size, and approximately \$70,000 in sales tax dollars.

Ultimate Rides buys, builds and sells used custom cars, trucks and SUVs. Many of its vehicles are in the \$20,000 range or more. It also has a service department for installing lift kits and various wheel or tire packages on vehicles.

The founders of Ultimate Rides are brothers Nick and Alex Bulanda. They started their business with their brother Jake who passed away in 2016.

Plans for the site include 11 bays on the north side of the building.

The dealership hopes to have construction complete by July, Altiery said.



Rendering provided

ULTIMATE RIDES IS expected to begin construction on its building in March, with completion expected by July. The new site for the dealership is on Hickory Street, next to the Sun Motel.

Pistol range being added in Diamond

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

A pistol shooting range will open this spring, an addition to the offerings at Diamond Indoor Trap Range.

Mayor Terry Kernc said the owners approached the village with a plan to construct a pistol range within the business, the proposal coming after the latest restaurant tenant vacated the building at 2155 E. Division St.

"They kicked around what would be good in there and I'm not surprised they came up with this, because Leon [Baine,

the owner] has told me a lot of people who come in the door immediately ask why they don't have pistol shooting there," Kernc said.

The Mayor said she and Baine talked through the idea and the plan was shared with the Village Board at a public meeting in December.

Kernc had expected some inquires from the community, but no one came with questions. However "the Board asked a lot of questions," she said.

The new range will be located within the area that was the restaurant. In that space, the owners are having a building constructed of concrete block walls and a concrete ceiling.

The multi-lane range will have a self-contained lead collection system with filtration.

There will be a secured entry for the pistol range and, at the request of the village, all guns brought in must be unloaded and in a case.

Baine has already posted a notice on the door to the business.

Kernc inquired about a computer simulator, similar to what police departments use, being brought in. It's something that could come to the business at some point.

Along with trap shooting, the business now offers ax throwing—another addition that came with the departure of the restaurant.

Baine said construction on the range may begin this month with an opening currently slated for April.

Fossil Ridge Library News

Fossil Ridge Public Library is now offering TWEEN exclusive programs for grades 6-8.

Adult Programs
Tai Chi, 3:45-4:45 p.m. every Tuesday. Designed for all fitness levels. This class consists of therapeutic Tai Chi chair exercises, full body stretching, and a basic 9 form Tai Chi set-all with focus on balance and mobility with time for contemplation.

Feb. 13-Adult Canvas Night, 6-7:30 p.m. Leave the kids with their grandparents for the night and come join us for a romantic adult canvas night where you'll be guided through how to recreate an amazing painting. Everyone's welcome. Bring your own beverage.

Feb. 14-Adult Spa Workshop, 5-6 p.m. Let's start the new year off right! Sign-up for a DIY Spa Workshop and make a bath bomb, sugar scrub and more for themselves or give as a gift to someone special.

Teen Programs
Feb. 17-Teen Spa Workshop, 1-2 p.m. Let's start the new school year off right. Teens can sign-up for a DIY Teen Spa

Workshop and make a bath bomb, sugar scrub and more for themselves or give as a gift to someone special.

Child Programs
Early Readers every Wednesday, 10:30-11 a.m. Introduce your children, ages 0-5, to the sounds and rhythms of language and reading with stories, music and rhymes.

Toddler Time every Thursday, 10:30-11 a.m. Bring your toddlers and explore with various toys and sensory materials each week. They'll improve their gross and fine motor skills, as well as their social interaction and language skills.

Feb. 13-Kids Craft Corner, 5:30-6:30 p.m. Are you in first or second grade? Join us Monday evenings for silly stories and easy crafts.

Feb. 16-Half-Day Movie Matinee, Rodrick Rules 1-3 p.m., rated PG. As a new school year begins, Greg is subject to relentless teasing from his brother, Rodrick. However, a secret could change everything.

Registration is required for all programs. For more information call 815-458-2187 or e-mail help@fossilridge.org.

RCMS names honors students

Reed-Custer Middle School has announced the names of those students who made the honor roll during the 2022-23 second quarter.

High honor roll, eighth grade
Ellie Adams, Grace Barry, Logan Bean, Taylor Bova, Reese Brown, Gillian Byerley, Hailey Compton, Mackenzie Foote, Kirstin Klein, Morgan Lamping, Kaitlyn Lantka, Kayla Schott, Nathan Trucano and Lucas Walsh.

Honor roll, eighth grade
Brodin Alexander, Dakota Altiery, Landon Beasley, Orion Bergmann, Tyler Compton, Frank Crotty, Mackenzie Disera, Michael Faletti, Alejandro Fierro, Evelyn Furlan, Emily Garabedian, Atiana Hood, Cade Johnson, Arlethe Leyva, Hayley Meyer, Zoey Miller, Corbin Neese, Carter Persic, Brandon Pries, Gracie Robinson, Peyton Schipiour, Ethan Segoviano, Kamrynn Skonetski, Jesse Tressouthick, Nicole Trulock, Mason Vasil, Jeffrey Wolford and Kaaden Wood.

High honor roll, seventh grade
Caedon Baumgartner, Joshua Cregger, Presley Dockery, Cloey Herbert, Chase Isaac, Kaiden Klein, Matthew Kuban, Peyton Landgraf, Teagan Lee, Hunter Lockhart, Carson Lowe, Brianna Morrissey, Reed Newbrough, Zachary Pruss, Colton Schultz, Jessica Stockin, Selah Walsh, Gabriel Whittenburg and Cole Yeates.

Honor roll, seventh grade
Mersadies Andrade, Olivia

Barbush, Trent Boudreau, Eddie Bryan, Viviana Cerullo, Jayden Cisco, Alexandra Coyle, Johnathan Daughenbaugh, Colton Drinkwine, Aidan Dubbert, Jagger Garcia, Collin Hakey, Nathan Hughes, Isaac Knight, Caidence Kuchar, Piper Kuchar, Brayden Landgraf, Makenna Lee, Madelynn Marschner, Amelia Meckler, Sophia Moyers, Jordana Nagle, Gabriella Pocius, Rylee Quigley, Emberly Schumacher, Abigail Spielbauer, Adalyn Steichen, Julianna Tabor, Lea Trz, Kadance Van Dwyne, Mackenzie VanWinsen, Nathan Vogler, Evynn Wilber, Kamryn Wilkey and Gabrielle Williams.

High honor roll, sixth grade
Brandy Bragg, Isabella Dixon, Sophia Dixon, Elleonor Frieders, Johanna Janopoulos, Robert Krakowski, Ava Povalish, Harper Roberts and Griffin Schmeckpeper.

Honor roll, sixth grade
Caden Atwell, Quinn Bandy, Logan Baumgartner, Maeley Bohac, Johnathan Buchanan, Heidi Budick, Cali Cassem, John Dixon, Sophia Flowers, Mary Foley, Thomas Ghesquiere, Faith Hathorn, Caydon Hoover, Jordan Howell, Kamryn Hutman, Cole Kmetz, Tallis Kochan, Nathan Leon, Dylan Leonard, Jakob Lichaj, Mackenzie Loveland, Nicholas Mallaney, Alivia McCure, Noah Murray, Jayden Norris, Charles Plummer, Kennley Poole-Crites, Corbin Stahl, Avah Thompson, Ethan Thompson, Avery Vanek and Nolan Wilkins.

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher
Marney Simon, editor

Custer Township seeks bids to tar & chip roads

PUBLIC NOTICE

TOWNSHIP OF CUSTER HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT, WILL COUNTY
18721 Bauer Rd., Custer Park, IL 60481
Advertisement for Bids

Time and Place of Opening Bids
Sealed proposals for the improvement described below will be received at the office of the Custer Highway Commissioner. Please mail sealed bids to the Custer Township Highway Commissioner, 18721 Bauer Rd., Custer Park, IL 60481. Bids will be received until Monday, February 13, 2023. Bids will be opened and read publicly at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 21, 2023 at the Custer Town Hall, 35332 Grant Street, Custer Park, IL 60481.

Description of Work
Advertisement for Bids for Tar and Chip. Must contact Highway Commissioner for details.
Bidder Instructions
Plans and proposal forms will be available by contacting Bill Marquardt, Highway Commissioner, 708-372-2500. The Highway Commissioner has the right to reject any and all bids.
Special Provisions
Prequalification of Bidders in accordance with Section 102.01 (b) of the Standard Specification will be required of all bidders on this proposal.

Bill Marquardt
Custer Township Highway Commissioner

1897 in Braidwood, very entertaining

As I have said newspapers from the 1890's are scarce for this region. The Wilmington paper has very few surviving and none from Braidwood.



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

The Joliet papers are more plentiful, and most of the following comes from there. But I am afraid there is very little "hard" news even so. Mostly so and so was visiting what's her face, or what's his name visited Chicago. I will save you from those kinds of entries. What is left? Mainly news of things to do and see in town.

We start in the last week of January 1897. "A grand Catholic fair and bazaar will be held at Music hall, commencing the night of Saturday, February 6 and concluding with a grand ball Friday night, February 12, when suitable prizes will be presented to the couple executing the neatest dance."

And "In spite of the cold weather the skating rink was

very well attended last night." And, "Don't miss the barrel race at the skating rink tonight." This refers to roller skating.

Music Hall converted its dance floor to a roller rink during the winter.

Mentions of it were in the Joliet paper weekly

Private parties made the news that month. "A party of young people went to Jerome Shenk's last night and danced till an early hour this morning. All report a very nice time and hope in the near future Jerome will have another party."

Not all was good news. On the last day of January, we read, "About 10 o'clock Tuesday night Marshal Allison noticed two persons at the back of William Fox's pool room. He started to see who the parties were and their object in being there when they took to their heels and ran away.

Allison gave chase for some distance but they finally

succeeded in making their escape. Next morning it was discovered that their object had been attained in breaking into the building through the back door and stealing a couple of boxes of cigars and about a dozen boxes of sardines."

The month of February began with the announcement for yet more dances. "Don't forget the masquerade ball Monday evening at Vacco's hall given by the Italian Sporting club. Admission 50 cents."

The Braidwood Athletic club will give a dance in Smolick's hall Saturday evening, February 20." "The Pythians of this city celebrated the 33rd anniversary of their order last night with a concert, banquet and ball, which was a grand success in every way."

Music Hall had more than skating, all sorts of entertainment played there. From February 1897, "Scott Raymond's comedians, a company of artists, will play at Music hall one week commencing Monday, February 22, singing and dancing each night."



W. J. MCCORMACK AND his fellow musicians that played Music Hall in March of 1897.

And, "The wonderful baby singer, Miss Mildred O'Connor, 4 years old, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. D. J. O'Connor, sang at the K. of P. concert Friday evening in Music Hall. She was enthusiastically applauded and acknowledged by the packed house to be the finest

baby singer in Braidwood."

And "The Owen Comedy Company will play "East Lynne" tonight at Music hall. This company have proved themselves to be first-class in all their plays and will no doubt have a crowded house this evening. Reserved seats on

sale at Barr's drug store."

The same week at the Presbyterian Church "The Jack Warbarton meetings every night this week. The gifted temperance orator and singer is holding meetings in the Presbyterian church. All are cordially invited to come and hear him."

March of 1897 brought one of the biggest of all holidays on the Braidwood calendar - St. Paddy's Day. "Division No. 1, Ancient Order of Hibernians, will celebrate St. Patrick's day with a grand concert and ball at Music Hall on the night of Wednesday, March 17.

A. J. Tobin and W. J. McCormack, of Chicago, expert performers on the violin and Irish bagpipes, will take part in the program.

They are also clever step dancers and will render a number of Irish songs. Our best local talent will also take part. Admission to the concert 25 cents. Ball 50 cents a couple."

We will take up April 1897 next time - elections and politics.



Courtesy photo

LADY COMET Judith Gamboa has the upper hand on her 106-pound opponent from Seneca. Gamboa will compete in the girls sectional at Geneseo on Friday and Saturday looking to advance to state for the second year in a row.

Gamboa hopes to make run at sectionals

BY MACKENZIE ROMINES
RCHS STUDENT REPORTER

The Illinois High School Association will be holding its second officially-sanctioned girls' wrestling tournament this year, giving female wrestlers who place the chance to compete at the state level.

Reed-Custer High junior Judith Gamboa is one of three girls on the schools wrestling team. Since there is no team for girls at Reed-Custer, Gamboa often has to compete against boys within the same 106-pound weight class.

To most people, the competition she faces may seem steep, yet she often maintains a level-head as well as a passion for the sport. She even encourages other girls who are interested to pursue the sport, saying that it is becoming a lot more inclusive and easier for girls to compete.

When asked why she wanted to wrestle, Gamboa said she grew up with a family that loves wrestling. Her three brothers had competed before her, and she felt "it was her time to wrestle" as well. She says that the sport actually is not too hard to manage, and that scheduling as well as being able to fall into a routine makes her activities very manageable.

She hopes to compete while in college as well as while serving in the military, but she is still on the fence about doing so. When asked about how she's treated as a female playing in a male dominated sport, Gamboa stated that she does not feel as though she faces a disadvantage. She claimed that she fits

in with the others on her team, and that they are all like a close knit family.

She also stressed the importance of work ethic, and practicing in ways to ensure that she has the upper hand over opponents.

"A lot of people focus a lot on strength, but I think it's really important to focus on my technique," she said. Gamboa also said that she feels as though she has never faced discrimination for participating on the boys team, and that most people like the idea of her being able to compete, and that the acceptance of girls in the sport has led to greater inclusivity within the activity.

Gamboa ended her interview by urging people to try pursuing things that catch their interest. She said to "always try something new, because if you don't you'll end up being regretful later in life". She ensures that just with effort, anyone can become comfortable with an activity they've never done before. She hopes the people around her will never be scared to guy outside of their comfort zones, and to always be excited and ready to experience something special.

She'll take that experience to the mat on Friday during the 58-team Geneseo Sectional. If she places among the top four, she'll advance to the state finals Feb. 24-25 in Bloomington for the second year in a row. A year ago she became the first female Reed-Custer wrestler to compete in the inaugural IHSA girls state final. She went 1-2 in the state tournament to finish the year with a 19-16 record.



Courtesy photo

JUNIOR JUDITH GAMBOA gets a victory handshake after defeating her opponent after a recent home match

RCHS seniors of the week

BY MACKENZIE ROMINES
RCHS STUDENT REPORTER

Each week the Braidwood Journal will feature members from the Reed-Custer High School class of 2023. Featured this week are Kaitlyn Faurot and Kaleb Neu who completed our questionnaire.

Kaitlyn Faurot

What do you plan to pursue upon graduation? Something in computer science

What is something most do not know about you? I own four instruments and know how to play seven.

What's an everyday activity you could win an Olympic medal at? Finding funny shirts that don't make sense

Favorite thing on the school menu? Chicken alfredo

What is one thing you refuse to eat? Bell peppers or olives

A sport or club that made an impact on you and why? Band! I love all things music and I'm lucky that I have such a great teacher and section that help me grow and think.

If you could travel anywhere, where would you go? Probably Italy, it sounds cool

What class would you create? Intro to Healthy Communication

Famous person (dead or alive) you would like to meet? Bill Hader, I think he would give awesome high-fives

Teacher shoutout? Mrs. Dennis, she's basically my second mom and I love her

Advice you would give to underclassmen? Do the things you're scared to do, get involved, and make the most of your time in high school

Kaleb Neu

What do you plan to pursue upon graduation? A career in Local 150 Operating Engineers

What is something most do not know about you? I workout 5-6 times a



KAITLYN FAUROT



KALEB NEU

What's an every day activity you could win an Olympic medal at? Karaoke

Favorite thing on the school menu? Chicken tenders/popcorn chicken

What is one thing you refuse to eat? Salisbury steak

A sport or club that made an impact on you and why? Basketball, it makes me get to the gym and workout

If you could travel anywhere, where would you go? Bahamas, it's beautiful

What class would you create? A class over the trades

Famous person (dead or alive) you would like to meet? Lil Uzi Vert, because I love his music

Teacher Shoutout? Mrs. Arseneau, she cares about all of her students

Advice you would give to underclassmen? Keep on your work, don't let it pile up

Casino

Those who wish to help out can also donate a raffle basket, separate from the larger prizes, these baskets are raffled off the night of the event to those in attendance.

Raffle baskets can include gift certificates to restaurants and retail businesses, T-shirts, sports and entertainment themed baskets, etc. with a value between \$25-\$100.

Gift card raffle baskets should be universally usable. Donations can help the

RCEA achieve the goal for this fundraiser, which is to provide scholarships to our graduates who plan to further their education.

To donate a door prize, the prize and description should be received by Feb. 11, to the RCEA, attn. Jennie Compton Reed-Custer Elementary School, 162 S. School St. in Braidwood.

Questions and to receive donation form, contact Jennie Compton at Jennie.Compton@rc255.net or Katy Cora at Katy.Cora@rc255.net.

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See the truth

BRAIDWOOD—Why is every article written on the front page about the things the Braidwood administration and police department do for the city is positive and yet every comment written in Soundoff, by the same person, is negative? When the paper writes an article it is written on facts. When this administration took over they spent the first year digging the city out of the huge debt the past administration had created. The administration and the police chief have worked hard to improve the city and help create a caring community. They increased the sales tax revenue by 61% and it will continue to increase as new businesses are built. Young people are moving to Braidwood to raise their families instead of moving out. All this is fact. Please remember, anyone can make up anything. Research and see the truth. The city is in great shape.

Thinking twice

WILMINGTON—Reading the negative comments about the Wilmington Area Historical Society. Are there secret meetings going on at different places within this community? If so what are your reasons for these meetings? Is there something that's not being told to the other board members? Is there a reason for these secretive meetings? Are the ones who meet at these meetings hiding important information from the public, but they can be sneaky without being noticed? Can this board tell the community what is really going on? I was told that there will be a new board in March. Is this because certain board members and members are refusing to obey the bylaws and the constitution? I think throwing out the Robert's rules at a meeting from a gentleman who's just a member. What is your clout in this community besides serving on other boards in Wilmington? As I remember the actions you voting the secretary off the board of the Wilmington Area Historical Society along with others. Prior to my knowledge I never saw you at a meeting until then. Are these the intentions of the board and others to overthrow the current board? Isn't this going against the bylaws and constitution as it's stated? I have some great articles and artifacts depicting Wilmington and its forefathers that has a lot of information that would benefit the museum. I decided the Wilmington Area Historical Society is not worthy of these artifacts and articles I have in my possession until they decide to have a decent board who will be working towards the future for the museum and not against the current board. Don't the residents of Wilmington deserve the truth that's being said behind the scenes? I heard there is a museum in Pontiac depicting history of Wilmington. I don't know how many residents are as disgusted with this museum as I am. Until then I will keep my artifacts and articles that would benefit the museum.

Need for more staff

COAL CITY—In a recent Coal City District 1 board meeting our special education manager was describing the need for more special education staff in our schools due to move ins. One of the board members was noticeably frustrated about the move ins. That is what happens when your district is a light house. It attracts families who need services. Our district is not financially hurting. To provide an excel-

lent education we need staff and decent class sizes not an artificial turf field or a shiny new addition to our schools.

Work for us

BRAIDWOOD—In response to meeting minutes. It is becoming clear that someone on the Braidwood City Council does not want the Braidwood citizens to know what is said and done at the meetings. What council members and most politicians are forgetting is they are suppose to work for the people and the improvements of the community not just for themselves. I think it's time everyone on the city council be replaced now.

Just a reminder

COAL CITY—The next Coal City Area Club meeting is Tuesday, Feb. 14 at 7 p.m. at the club office. The senior members changes are on the agenda. Being a former board member myself, in my opinion this matter could have been handled in a different way. Come and voice your opinion. Kenneth Mack

Santos an excellent pick

As a lifelong proud Democrat I had a good laugh when I heard that Trump is once again running for president. He lost the popular vote in two elections in a row and in 2024 he will get the hat trick. When he runs he will need someone to fill the ticket as vice president. Mike Pence is off the list since he's probably still running away from the mob Trump sent to hang him two years ago. But there is a new face who is a prefect match for trump though it's hard to believe he is more of a fraud and a better liar than Trump. Of course I am speaking of the new congressman, George Santos. Next week I expect him to tell us that he invented the alphabet and that he has walked on the moon on more than one occasion. He is part of the Republican freak show that is now in control of the US House and the Nation's capital. Included in this group are election deniers, a high school dropout, shameless publicity hounds and quanon conspiracy idiots. I can't imagine who votes to put these people in office but just read Sound-off every week and you will discover how crazy the Right Wing nuts are. The Republican party has been promoting stupidity and lies for years and now we are sadly living with the results.

Smoke and mirrors

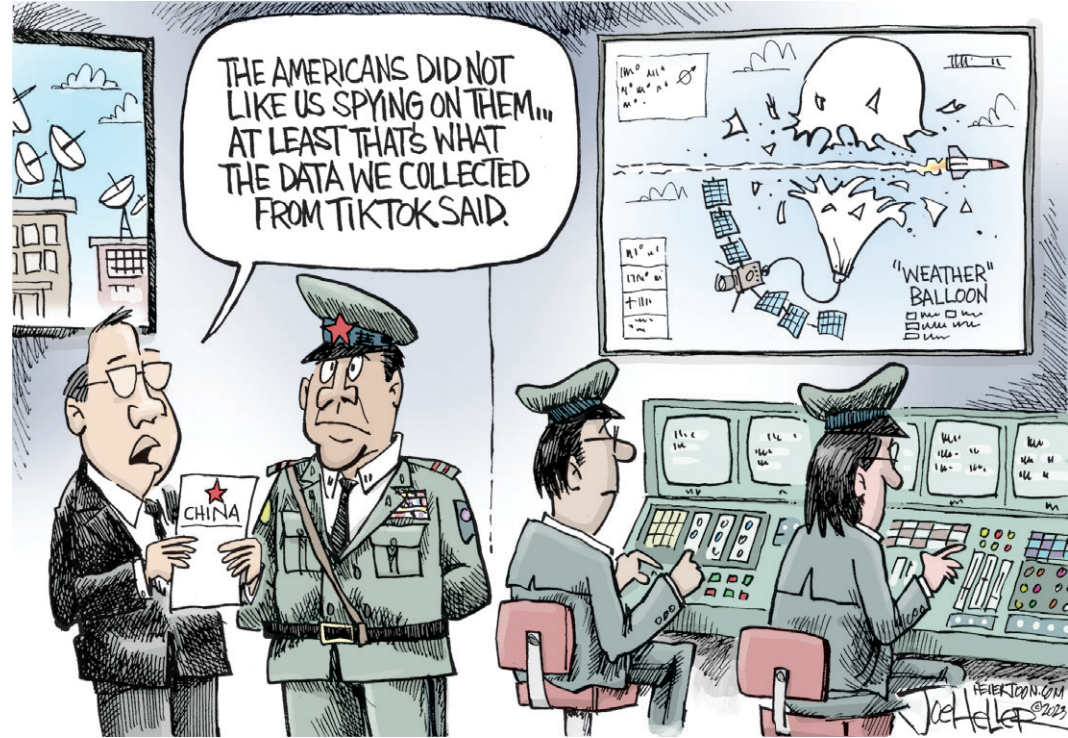
BRAIDWOOD—Braidwood residents beware. It's election time and you're going to see lots of baited promises and lucrative future offerings by displaying what they want you to believe is yet to come out of city hall. It's all a desperate and elaborate display of smoke and mirrors in an attempt to lure your vote. Don't be fooled by the delicious icing covering the cake because the bakers only know how to cover up and disguise their rotten creations underneath.

Enemies among us

SHADOW LAKES—For years I have been saying China is our biggest danger, not MAGA Republicans, not white supremacists. It's China and the politicians, movie stars, sport stars that support China because they are getting a piece of the pie. Know your enemy.

Keep it civil

BRAIDWOOD—Every single person sitting at the head table of the council chambers dur-



ing the Braidwood City Council meetings should be ashamed of themselves. It is an absolute embarrassment to our community to watch the turmoil unfold and accusations being thrown back and forth for the public to see. From the way our mayor has used profanity to describe some Braidwood residents and the way our city clerk is trying to shame those seeking information, to the back and forth badgering and flogging between the city administrator and the street department commissioner. You are all adults and supposed to be role models for our younger citizens, so start acting like it instead of acting like little immature children. There's plenty of 10 year olds who act more mature, respectful and professional than any of you. The residents of Braidwood are sick and tired of it and we want it to stop.

No Christian is hateful

DIAMOND—Regarding "Religion is dying" from Wilmington on Jan. 25, 2023. I can't believe it was your intention that you have started a discussion about the endless struggle between good and evil. As an atheist you do not believe in the existence of God. But He knows of your existence because He created you in His image. God is the utmost authority of love and good. Each and every human born is endowed by his creator with the ability to choose between good and evil over, and over and over each minute, day and year of his or her lifetime. Your mother chose life and love so you could be born. God gave each of us a free will or right to choose. It came from God and only God can remove it. Many people, institutions and governments have tried to remove our God given freedoms, the freedom to speak truth, the freedom to worship God both privately and publicly and the freedom to defend ourselves from evil encroachment. Historically, violence and sin have even involved what is called the "church." There have been and will continue to be "false prophets." They are not instituted by God but mankind's capacity to choose evil.

Religion is a broad general name for all such systems of beliefs from the earliest recorded history to the present day. Whereas Christians affirm the divinity of Christ Jesus, the only begotten son of God, in your own words Christianity is still the dominant religion in America as well it should be as our constitution, the bill of rights and our own very government itself was conceived, designed and dedicated to Christianity. Christianity is the personal relationship of a single person to Jesus. A congregation is any number of two or more people of like faith worshipping together. Both the worshippers themselves and the place where they meet are known as the "church." The "LGBTQ Community" was not created by the divine nor was it constituted as part of our country. It is a form of the "nones" you mentioned that don't belong to any form of religion, however they are endowed by their creator with the same ability to choose between good and evil as is the rest of humanity. You did mention the existence of heaven and hell. It is neither the duty nor the privilege of any human being to judge or decree where individuals will spend eternity. Jesus is our only judge, seated on His throne at the right hand of God. Jesus will decide where every individual will spend eternal life. As Christ was dying on the cross covered with every sin committed by mankind at that time before the birth of Christ and until the end of time. Some of His last words were forgive them Father, for they know not what they do. Christ's resurrection from the dead on the third day was His victory over sin and death. From the time of our birth until the day we die on this earth we have the right to choose good or evil. Jesus commands us to pray for our enemies that they might repent of their sins and seek God's forgiveness. No Christian is hateful, angry nor takes pleasure at what you do, say or the choices you make. "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you then choose for yourself this day who you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15. Amen

Commentary

Illinois state leaders see taxpayers' 'no' as reason to just ask again

BY BRAD WEISENSTEIN
ILLINOIS POLICY INSTITUTE

You've been in the supermarket and seen the beleaguered parent bugged by a child for a package of cookies. "No" is followed by asking again, and whining, and asking yet again.

Illinois taxpayers are seeing this scene, only they are the parents and state leaders the needy youngsters.

Voters already said "no" in November 2020 to replacing the Illinois Constitution's flat tax protection with a progressive state income tax. They did so by a nearly 7 percentage point margin.

But some in Springfield are refusing to take "no" for an answer.

The day after the proposal failed, Gov. J.B. Pritzker had his spokesman claiming voters were deceived into rejecting the tax, despite the \$58 million of his own money he dumped into his failed campaign that claimed taking another \$3 billion from Illinois taxpayers was

a "fair tax."

Duped? More like adults deciding Pritzker & Co. needed no more cookies – or rather denying them a way to consume taxes from different income groups, including retirees, whenever they wanted.

And don't forget that polls let slip exactly what the progressive tax could lead to.

"One thing a progressive tax would do is make clear you can have graduated rates when you are taxing retirement income," Illinois Treasurer Michael Frerichs said while speaking in 2020. "And, I think that's something that's worth discussion."

We also heard from indicted former Illinois House Speaker Mike Madigan's successor, Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, when he let the proposal resurface about three months after voters rejected it.

"We need to tell the taxpayers how we will spend this money," Welch said in February 2021 at the Economic Club of Chicago. "Tie progressive tax(es) to paying off pen-

sion(s). Voters will trust us more."

Which brings Illinois taxpayers to state leaders' latest refusal to listen. On the heels of giving themselves 18% raises in their base pay, state lawmakers again are looking for that power to end the state's flat income tax of 4.95% and they expect voters to let them set whatever rates they wish by targeting whatever income groups they wish.

It's a progressive tax. They call it fair. And they are fine with ignoring the "no" from voters.

The chief House sponsor for putting the progressive tax on the ballot recently told Crain's Chicago Business he is planning to bring it back, maybe in a month, now that he's a state senator.

"If you really believe in something, you don't give up after one loss," state Sen. Robert Martwick, D-Chicago, said about reviving the plot. "It's the right thing to do."

Right for state lawmakers who want ever more to spend, even with a record \$46 billion

budget this year? Right for taxpayers who can only be sure their taxes will never go down in Illinois?

Pritzker reacted: "That's not something I am focused on this session." That's far from telling Martwick to stand down, but maybe Pritzker is getting the message?

Illinois lost a record 104,437 residents last year – the ninth straight year of population loss. Losses are because people are moving away. They've said they are moving away because of taxes, and for the better job and housing markets lower-tax states offer.

Whether they are insistent, or deaf or just want what they want regardless of the consequences, members of the new 103rd Illinois General Assembly should not take their supermajority status for granted. They may get what they want for now, but they also may get abandoned in the supermarket.

Brad Weisenstein is the managing editor of the free market Illinois Policy Institute.

IL Legislature returns with Democrats in the supermajority

BY GREG BISHOP
THE CENTER SQUARE

Illinois state lawmakers returned to Springfield Tuesday.

Both chambers have passed new rules for the 103rd General Assembly that began last month following November's election.

More than 1,300 bills have been newly filed in the Senate. Friday is the deadline for more.

The House has a deadline of Feb. 17 to file bills. There've been nearly 2,200 filed.

During debate last week over House rules, state Rep. Patrick Windhorst, R-Metropolis, urged for more equity in whether Republican bills, with bipartisan support, can get a fair hearing.

"It's no guarantee they would be voted on the floor, just that they could be heard and voted on in committee," Windhorst argued. "And I think the members on our side of the aisle believe that's just fundamentally fair, it's a matter of fairness."

State Rep. C.D. Davidsmeyer, R-Jacksonville, said giving the Republican super minority a voice can be as simple as allowing equal time for witnesses during committee hearings.

"We wanted to ensure that all of our members of the committee, as well as all the members of the House of Representatives, have the opportunity to truly hear both sides of the issue," Davidsmeyer said.

House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, D-Hillside, said Democrats won the supermajority.

"We will not waste the people's time," Welch said. "There are 78 of us on this side of the aisle for a reason. The voters have spoken."

He laid out what he said is their priorities, like labor issues, access to abortion and election law among others.

"They want us to continue balancing budgets and helping working families," Welch said. "That's what we're going to do here. We're gonna do the serious work that we were sent here to do."

The Senate has hearings scheduled this week for committees touching on the judiciary, insurance and higher education this week.

The House has a subject matter hearing today to review the status of the state's evidence-based funding for K-12 education.

More hearings could be scheduled in the days ahead.

Next week, Gov. J.B. Pritzker delivers his budget and State of the State Address.

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See Page 11 for Details



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Lewis Univ. dean's list

Just over 1,300 students were honored on the Lewis University Dean's List for the 2022 Fall Semester.

To be eligible for this honor, students must have completed a minimum of 12 credit hours during the semester with a grade point average of at least 3.5 and with no "D" or "F" grades.

Area students on the list include Jaden Christian,

McKenzie Marcum and Haley Crescenti, of Wilmington; Cain Headrick, of Custer Park; Lexi Banas, Jessica Leasure, Victoria Miller, Jevin Reed and Ryleigh Christensen, of Coal City; Nicole Wiltz, of Diamond and Alexander Crickman, Alec Dinh, McKenzie Ellison, Molly Gustafson, Kyla Kjellesvik, Jennifer Murphy and Jon Overton, of Morris.

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If you favor rum, try a classic Jamaican Wray & Ting

In recent years both the whiskey and the rum world have been blessed with "cask strength" or "barrel proof" expressions from distillers, meaning that the spirits are bottled higher than the standard 80 proof. In some cases, much higher.

One of the highest-octane expressions in the rum world comes from Jamaican distillers Wray & Nephew. Despite the "overproof" bottling, Wray & Nephew has solidified its place in Jamaican culture as part of one of the most popular Caribbean cocktails, the iconic Wray and Ting.

Wray & Nephew began producing Jamaican rum in 1825 and has marketed many different expressions of their rum with varying degrees of success and staying power. The Wray flagship brand is their overproof white rum bottled at 63% ABV, or 126 proof.

Wait a minute, 126 proof? Is it flammable? As a matter of fact, it is. Outside of Jamaica Wray & Nephew overproof is primarily used as a "float" on top of flaming drinks and shots.

It has culinary applications as well, many chefs use the potent Jamaican rum to flambé desserts. Occasionally bartenders will use it to give a kick to an overly sweet drink such as a Rum Runner or a Zombie.

In Jamaica, they actually drink the Wray overproof, and they drink a lot of it.

Throughout the years I have heard that 90% of all rum consumed in Jamaica is pro-

duced by the Wray distillery, and I wondered exactly how Jamaicans were enjoying their Wray & N e p h e w . Overproof rum has a certain jet fuel burn to it, although it has sweet notes on the front end. The finish is every bit rough as you can imagine.

Sure, it's an acquired taste, but one that is celebrated on the island. Wray & Nephew overproof is a great source of pride for the island and toasting with the iconic spirit is a part of many milestones and celebrations in Jamaican life.

It turns out that the most popular rum in Jamaica is used to make the most popular mixed drink in Jamaica, the Wray and Ting.

Wray and Ting? We know by the name that the drink uses Wray & Nephew, but what is Ting?

Ting is a Jamaican grapefruit soda, one that is wildly popular on the island. Many tourists have enjoyed a Wray & Ting on a Jamaican cruise and attempted to replicate the drink at home using Squirt, or a store brand American grapefruit soda.

Squirt is not an ideal substitute for Ting as Squirt is sweetened with high fructose corn syrup whereas Ting is sweetened with pure cane sugar.



THE SUNDAY COCKTAIL
Brian Runq

strong as it has ever been, it may be in a supermarket near you. Be sure to check the "international foods" section of your local store if you do not see Ting in the soda aisle.

I picked up a six pack at my local store and had a few sips of the Ting on its own, and it does have a unique and refreshing sweetness to it. I am not a huge fan of soda, but Ting over ice does the trick and tastes like actual grapefruit.

If you are unable to find Ting locally, it can be ordered from Amazon or any number of other online retailers. As mentioned earlier the distribution is getting better, and you have social media to thank for that.

Thousands of Facebook posts depicting vacationers with Wray and Ting has managed to create worldwide demand for Ting.

Pick up some Wray & Nephew overproof, and I hope that you can track down a six pack of Ting. Let's pour one of these.

One thing that you will

notice in the recipe below is that the starting point for this drink is 6 ounces of soda to 1 ounce of rum.

That seems like a bit much on the soda side, but remember that we are dealing with a rum bottled at 63% ABV. In terms of ABV, one ounce of overproof rum equals approximately 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 ounces of standard 80 proof rum.

If you want more kick in your Wray and Ting you can certainly turn up the heat by adding more of the overproof rum.

One more thing, and this is important: Don't forget the lime. I prefer to squeeze in at least 1/2 oz. fresh lime juice, maybe a bit more. Keep in mind that this is a 7 ounce drink on ice, it can take a little lime.

Simple as it may be, the Wray and Ting is a cultural phenomenon that must be sampled if you are a fan of Caribbean cocktails.

Building a dynamite reggae playlist is not a requirement to enjoy a Wray and Ting, but it certainly doesn't hurt either.

The classic Jamaican Wray and Ting is served over ice in a Collins (tall) glass.

Fill glass with ice and add:
1 oz. Wray and Nephew White Overproof Rum
6 oz. Ting Grapefruit Soda
Squeeze in juice from one lime wedge

Stir and garnish with lime wedge

Until next week, enjoy responsibly.

Illinois' biometric law strengthened by latest ruling

BY HANNAH MEISEL
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — People who've been subject to fingerprinting, face or retinal scans as either employees or customers of Illinois companies have five years to file lawsuits if they believe the business violated a stringent state privacy law, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled last week.

It's the latest in a handful of cases that have reached Illinois' high court in recent years, all refining the state's Biometric Information Privacy Act. Also known as BIPA, the first-of-its-kind law has, since 2008, made Illinois the only state that grants a private right of action to sue over the improper collection and mishandling of biometric data.

Justices ruled BIPA has an unequivocal five-year statute of limitations on all claims under the law — not a one-year window as employers and business groups had hoped for.

In this case, logistics company Black Horse Carriers Inc., which has since been acquired by trucking giant Penske, faced a class action lawsuit. A former employee initiated the suit, alleging the company violated BIPA by requiring time clock fingerprint authentication without maintaining a publicly available policy on how the company would treat employees' biometric data.

The suit also claimed Black Horse failed to provide notice to employees that the timeclock was collecting their fingerprints, and didn't explicitly get employees' consent.

The company argued the court should've applied the one-year statute of limitations under Illinois' Right of Publicity Act. But the court unanimously disagreed.

In issuing a blanket five-year statute of limitations for all BIPA claims, the 5-0 majority of the court emphasized that "the full ramifications of the harms associated with biometric technology is unknown." Without the law, the court wrote, individuals whose biometric data was improperly collected or disseminated might never even know it — at least until they felt the consequences.

Nearly 1.5 million Illinoisans were eligible for their share of a \$650 million class action settlement with Facebook under BIPA in 2020, a five-year case that was one of

the first among thousands of suits filed under the law, with the trend really taking off around 2018, Kays said.

Thursday's opinion was another legal victory for proponents of BIPA — especially a handful of law firms specializing in filing class action cases over biometric data. Those attorneys have made the same basic argument in thousands of lawsuits over the last several years: if someone's identity is stolen, they can obtain a new social security number. But if their biometric data is stolen, it's impossible to get a new fingerprint or face.

So far, Illinois' high court has agreed — as did a federal jury in October, granting \$228 million in damages in a class action BIPA case against BNSF Railways, the first jury test of the law.

Pritzker says COVID-19 disaster proclamation to end in May

BY HANNAH MEISEL
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — Exactly 38 months after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, Illinois will no longer be under a disaster proclamation as of May 11,

Gov. JB Pritzker announced last week.

That's the same day President Joe Biden will end the national public health emergency, which just passed the three-year mark last week.

Pritzker had declared a public health emergency two days before the WHO's pandemic determination and has renewed his disaster proclamation every 30 days since then.

The repeated proclamations gave the governor authority for COVID-related actions such as closing schools, issuing stay-at-home orders and mandating masks and vaccines. But they were a source of consternation for Pritzker's political opponents.

The governor had slowly rolled back his COVID-19 mandates over the past year, including an action in October when he reversed the requirement for vaccines, testing and

masks in health care settings.

But Illinois is still one of seven states with some sort of COVID-related emergency proclamation on its books.

These disaster declarations have allowed those states — including Republican-run Texas — to continue benefiting from COVID-era bumps in federal reimbursements for programs like Medicaid, additional benefits for those on food stamps and the ability to quickly deploy emergency workers to respond to areas in need, like hospitals with severely short staffing.

"Our state's disaster proclamation and executive orders enabled us to use every resource at our disposal from building up testing capacity and expanding our health care workforce to supporting our vaccine rollout and mutual aid efforts," Pritzker said in a statement.

Pritzker said 1.4 million

children in Illinois received nutrition support under the additional Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. He also pointed to the expansion of telehealth during the pandemic under his disaster proclamation, which has largely been adapted into state law after it proved popular with doctors and patients alike.

Opponents to Pritzker's repeated issuance of disaster proclamations insisted the governor was limited to the 30 days laid out in state law, but legal challenges to that effect ultimately failed after months of litigation.

The governor's disaster proclamation also allowed for the activation of the State Emergency Operations Center, which brokered cooperation between the leaders of different state agencies in response to COVID-19.

As Illinois aims to add more wind farms, concerns raised about wildlife

BY KEVIN BESSLER
THE CENTER SQUARE

As Illinois forges ahead with plans to assist in the adding of more wind farms around the state, environmentalists say there is a downside.

Hundreds of thousands of birds and bats perish annually in collisions with turbine blades and other equipment at renewable energy installations.

The country's solar farms have a bird problem as well. Utility companies reportedly have been finding bird carcasses littering the ground at their facilities for years. In 2016, a study by ScienceDirect estimated that the hundreds of utility-scale solar farms around the U.S. may kill nearly 140,000 birds annually.

During debate on legislation at the Illinois statehouse about county control over placement of renewable energy projects, state Sen. Chapin Rose, R-Mahomet, cited another study in which a large portion of the deaths involved eagles and hawks.

"Why is that important? Because they're the ones that keep all the other species in check," Rose said. "They are the ones who eat

mice and rats and prevent vermin from spreading disease."

Last year, a wind energy company was ordered to pay more than \$8 million in fines and restitution after at least 150 eagles were killed at its wind farms in eight states, including Illinois. NextEra Energy subsidiary ESI Energy pleaded guilty to three counts of violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Conservation biology professor Angelo Capperella at Illinois State University is concerned about bats, which help control insect populations.

"The bats are a really huge issue, one that I don't know how the wind farm companies are going to deal with it because bats have been declining for other reasons as well," Capperella said.

One solution would be to turn off the windmills at night when bats are migrating, Capperella said.

It now appears Illinois will become involved in the siting of wind and solar projects. Gov. J.B. Pritzker is expected to sign legislation which essentially takes away local control from counties for the siting of wind farms. It is a reversal from last summer when Pritzker said the state would not get involved.

Who makes the best chili?



Freemasons invite you to turn in your best

LOOK WHO'S IN the kitchen. Ben Stickel may have a secret ingredient in his chili but to find out you'll have to come to the Wilmington Masonic Lodge, 311 Main St., Wilmington, on Sunday Feb. 26. From 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. the Wilmington Freemasons Lodge #208 will have its 13th annual Chili Cook-Off to fund the Pedals for Progress program. Tasting and a bowl of house chili is \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids over 11 and free for kids 11 and under. There will also be \$1 hot dogs available. Think you have what it takes to be the Chili King? To register as a contestant call Stickel 815-370-7331 or Matt Lohmar 815-210-9606.

Dropoff string lights, electronics Thursday

Will County's free electronics drop-off event will be held Thursday, Feb. 9, from 5-7 p.m. at the Wilmington City Hall parking lot, 1165 S. Water St.

Holiday string lights that are no longer working may be dropped off for recycling. This is for string lights only, no stand alone LEDs, CFLs or other fluorescent lights.

Participants are reminded to remain in their vehicles at all times, show ID by holding it to the window for staff to see and then allow staff to remove items without assistance from each vehicle.

Items accepted include: Televisions (limit 2), monitors, printers, computers (desktops, laptops, notebooks, tablets),

electronic keyboards, fax machines, videocassette recorders, portable digital music players, DVD players, DVD recorders, video game consoles, small scale servers, scanners, electronic mice, digital converter boxes, cable receivers, satellite receivers, cell phones, computer cable, portable digital assistants (PDAs) and zip drives.

Electronic items contain materials that can be recycled countless times while other materials in items are considered hazardous.

The recycling takes place in Wilmington the second Thursday of each month. An ID showing Will County residency may be required.

Mobile food pantry coming Monday to So. Wilmington

Catholic Charities' Mobile Food Pantry will be distributing food on Monday, Feb. 13, at 4 p.m. at St. Lawrence Church (135 Rice Road in South Wilmington) in the church parking lot (rain or shine).

Catholic Charities and the Northern Illinois Food Bank have partnered to deliver nutritious food (meat, produce and nonperishable items) to people in need.

Participants are asked to

stay in their cars. The Mobile Food Pantry will use a "drive thru" method to distribute pre-packed groceries to ensure that all participants are safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You do not have to be Catholic to participate. Catholic Charities helps people of all faiths and beliefs. For more information about Catholic Charities, please visit catholiccharitiesjoiel.org.

SIUE fall deans list

Southern Illinois University announced the names of students qualifying for the fall 2022 dean's list, maintaining a grade-point

average of 3.5 or better and have 12 hours calculated (B is equivalent to 3.0; A to 4.0).

Among those students were Destiny Dodge and Colleen Feeney, of Coal City; Carley Wilkerson, of Wilmington and Elizabeth Carroll, of Mazon.

McDonough Street bridge to reopen, Jefferson St. to close

The Illinois Department of Transportation announced that the McDonough Street bridge over the Des Plaines River in Joliet will reopen, weather permitting, Monday, Feb. 13.

The bridge was closed in November as part of ongoing efforts to upgrade the movable bridges in downtown Joliet to allow them to be controlled

from a central location, creating a more efficient system of lifting and lowering the bridges and increasing safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and marine traffic.

Shortly after the reopening of McDonough Street, the Jefferson Street (U.S. 30) bridge will be closed until, weather permitting, the evening of Friday, Feb. 17. The

closure is necessary to complete final testing of the remote-control system that was installed on the bridge last year.

A detour will direct motorists to Raynor Avenue (U.S. 52) and McDonough Street (U.S. 52) to cross the river and reconnect with Jefferson Street via Chicago Street (Illinois 53).

Nutrition experts rank best diets

One month has passed and are you still sticking with that new year's resolution to try to lose weight?

There's a lot more to it than just grabbing every "reduced fat" item off the grocery store shelf.

Karen Whitehorn, MD, an OSF HealthCare internal medicine physician, hears questions all the time about diets. Her first question back is usually: what do you want out of your diet? Do you want to be healthy? Lose weight? Manage a medical condition? Sort through the details, and you'll find the best option.

U.S. News and World Report recently consulted a panel of medical and nutrition experts to rank the best diets. The Mediterranean diet topped the list. Dr. Whitehorn says this diet is based on the eating habits of people who live near the Mediterranean Sea. It's a plant-based diet, incorporating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, brown rice and seafood.

"The Mediterranean diet is actually pretty easy to follow. But you need to make sure you have the right food in your home," Dr. Whitehorn says. "It might be a little more difficult during the winter to get fresh fruits and vegetables. If you can't, frozen is OK. Canned is OK. But we recommend you rinse the canned food first to decrease some of the salt."

Number two on the U.S. News list is a plan Dr. Whitehorn recommends often: dietary approaches to stop hypertension, or the DASH diet. It recommends foods that are low in sodi-

um and high in magnesium and potassium.

Some people may incorporate fasting into their diet. Dr. Whitehorn says fasting, when done in consultation with a medical expert, can work. But she's hesitant to recommend it broadly.

"Our bodies need nutrients every couple hours. So to not eat anything for 12 hours can cause other problems," Dr. Whitehorn says. "If you're diabetic and don't eat for 12 hours, your blood sugar could drop too low. Then when you eat, it could go too high."

Watch out for fad diets on social media, Dr. Whitehorn says. Remember the saying: if it's too good to be true, it probably is.

"Fad diets are not consistent. They're not healthy. They don't provide you the nutrients you need. If it requires you to take a pill or drastically reduce your calories, it's not really a healthy diet. It can only be followed in the short term."

On the contrary, working out a diet plan with your health care provider has a better chance of achieving long term results.

"A healthy diet gives you the energy you need to do everyday activities," Dr. Whitehorn says. "It has been shown to increase your life expectancy. And it helps prevent chronic medical problems like high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer and heart disease."

Visit the OSF HealthCare website for healthy recipes.

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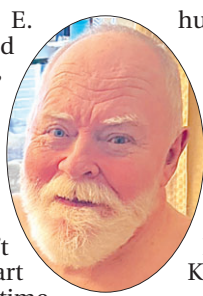
OBITUARIES

Kenneth E. Kern Jr.

 **GODLEY**—Kenneth E. Kern Jr, 73, of Godley, passed away peacefully on Jan. 30, 2023.

He was born Aug. 12, 1949 to the late Kenneth Kern Sr. and Joyce (Kline) Kern.

He served time in the U.S. Army and was educated in Morris schools. Ken was a jack of all trades. There wasn't a thing he couldn't fix or didn't have a part for in his garage. He enjoyed spending time with his dog, "Buddy Bud," and was never hesitant to let everyone know that was his favorite child. He was a social butterfly and truly didn't know a stranger. He loved to entertain with stories of the past so outrageous one couldn't help but wonder if they had any merit, but also confident in their truth because he was also well known for his no nonsense honesty. Ken had a way of charming his way in to people's lives. With his piercing blue eyes, his snow white beard, and his infectious chuckle, he held an uncanny resemblance to Santa Claus. He will forever be missed for his never ending sense of



humor and his gentle hearted nature.

Kenneth is survived by his children: David (Kim) Kern, of Dwight; Robin Esparza and Dottie (Doug) Savarino, all of Braidwood and Cindie Kern, of Joliet; 11 grandchildren and one great-grandson as well as his siblings: Ray Kern, of Princeton; Gary (Linda) Kern, of Princeton; Debra (Eugene) Pfister, of St. Charles, MO and Don Kern, of Townsend GA.

Kenneth was preceded in death by his parents, sister-in-law, Louis Kern and grandson, Jensen Esparza.

Cremation rites were accorded. Graveside services will take place at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood on Friday, Feb. 17, 2023 at 1 p.m. with military honors being conducted. The family invites all their friends and family to join in a celebration of Ken's life immediately following the services at the VFW in Wilmington.

Preferred memorials in Kenneth's name may be made to the family for their distribution.

Evelyn Fennewald

WILMINGTON—Evelyn Lucille Fennewald (nee Brown), 80, of Wilmington, passed away peacefully on Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023 at her home.

Born Oct. 28, 1942 in Joliet, Evelyn was a daughter of Harry Glenn and Genevieve Lucille "Jean" (Muncy) Brown. She was raised and educated in Wilmington and graduated from Wilmington High School. Evelyn was a former member of First Baptist Church of Wilmington and currently attended and belonged to Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Wilmington.

Evelyn had several places of employment over the years including Precision Components, Family Dollar Store and the Wilmington School District cafeterias. Most recently, she had worked for Chicagoland Speedway as a ticket taker. Evelyn took great pleasure in going for walks or dancing, but was happiest when she was spending quality time with her family and friends who she loved so much.

Survivors include her husband, Melvin A. Fennewald, who she married Jan. 8, 2004; one



sister: Kathleen (Max) Hoffman, of Channahon; one brother, Edward (Sandy) Scrogam, of Gardner; three step-children: Brenda, Melanie and Melody and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as well as nieces, nephews and cousins.

Evelyn was preceded in death by her parents, three siblings: Janet Brown, Roland "Ronnie" Brown and Robert (Sarah) Brown.

Funeral services were held at Baskerville Funeral Home in Wilmington on Wednesday, Feb. 8, 2023. Deacon Jay Plesse from St. Rose Parish presided, and burial followed in Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wilmington.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.BaskervilleFuneral.com to sign the online guest book, upload photographs, and share Evelyn's memorial page online through social media.

Funeral services and arrangements were made under the direction and care of Baskerville Funeral Home in Wilmington.

Deborah A. Piazza

GOOSE LAKE—Deborah "Debbie" A. Piazza, 70, of Morris (Goose Lake), passed away on Sunday, Feb. 5, 2023 at Morris Hospital.

Debbie was born on Aug. 12, 1952 in Joliet to Howard A. and Joule L. (nee Heck) Mead. She grew up in the Joliet area, attending St. Francis High School and later Joliet Central High School graduating with the class of 1970. Debbie married the love of her life, James A. Piazza, on Aug. 1, 1971 at St. Mary Carmelite Church. Together they raised a family of two children. While being a mother and homemaker, Debbie also worked as a tax preparer for H&R Block and also for her own business, TaxTyme, which she ran for over 20 years. Debbie had a variety of interests. She took pride in working on her yard and gardening. She enjoyed time with her family together at the lake with activities like boating, fishing and camping, always with an "Old Style" in her hand. She and Jim spent many years traveling to gulf side Florida beaches. Debbie relished time spent with her family during holidays with Christmas being her favorite. She was a great home cook and was famous for her baked beans, spaghetti, meatloaf and goulash.

She is survived by her husband of 51 years, Jim Piazza; their children, James A. Jr. (Cheryl M.) Piazza, of Belmont, NC and Carrie A. Piazza, of Coal City; their grandchildren: Bryce A.



Easton, Nathan J. Piazza and Nikala M. Piazza; her sisters, Dianna (Chuck) Anderson, of Rockford and Dannette (Jim) Young, of Bolivar, MO; brother, Howard (Mary) Mead, of Monona, WI; sisters-in-law, Chris Mead, of Joliet; Regina (Alex) Orta, of Clearwater, FL and Pam (Mike) Coyne, of Rutherfordton, NC; brothers-in-law, Terry Sr. (Barb) Piazza, of Joliet and Dan (Mary Lou) Piazza, of Sycamore. Also surviving are numerous nieces and nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews and great-great-nieces and great-great-nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Howard A. and Joule L. Mead; her sister, Donna Mead; her two brothers, Barry Mead and Jimmy Mead and her father-in-law and mother-in-law, Al and Bernadine Piazza.

Cremation rites will be accorded. Memorial Visitation will be on Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 from 4 p.m. until 7 p.m. at Ferrari Funeral Services, 1044 Ferrari Drive, Coal City.

Memorials may be directed to the Shriner's Children's Hospital, 2211 North Oak Park Ave., Chicago, IL 60707. www.shrinerschildren.org.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guestbook at www.ferrarifuneral.com.

Ferrari Funeral Services of Coal City are entrusted with arrangements.

Vonda Smith

WILMINGTON—Vonda Smith, 65, of Wilmington, passed away unexpectedly on Sunday, Feb. 5, 2023 at Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee.

Born Oct. 7, 1957 in North Kingstown, RI, Vonda Leah was a daughter of Owen and Margaret "Peggy" (Starkey) Webb. She moved with her family to Wilmington where she graduated from Wilmington High School with the class of 1975. Vonda married Gary Lynn Smith and together they moved to California. They later relocated briefly to Kansas until returning to Wilmington in 1989. Vonda gained employment with Precision Components, Inc. in Wilmington where she worked for over 30 years.

Vonda was very active in her children's extra curricular activities, participating as a coach and scorekeeper with the Wilmington Baseball and Softball Association, and rarely missed one of their games. This commitment carried on through her grandchildren, sometimes traveling through multiple states to support their sporting events. Being a loving and committed wife, mother, and grandmother was Vonda's true calling in life. She loved spending time with her boys going camping and fishing, and always looking forward to their family trips to Missouri. Vonda was also a devoted daughter to her father, making sure he was always well taken care of. She enjoyed reading, especially Stephen King novels, and her regular Friday night card games, but family and friends always came first and she will be dearly missed by all who knew and loved her.

Survivors include her father, Owen Webb, of Wilmington; three children: Dale Smith, of



Wilmington; Derek (Tiffany) Smith, of New Lenox and Dustin Smith, of Wilmington; three granddaughters: Kendall, Kali and Kloe Smith, of New Lenox; one sister, Tonya (Ken) Hagemeyer, of Glendale, AZ and one brother, Kevin (Paula) Webb, of Wilmington; four brothers-in-law and numerous nieces and nephews.

Vonda was preceded in death by her mother, Peggy Webb; her husband, Gary Smith and one brother in infancy.

The family will receive friends for a visitation on Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Road in Wilmington from 4 p.m. until the time of funeral service at 7 p.m.

Cremation rites will be accorded following the funeral services.

Vonda will be laid to rest at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood on Monday, Feb. 13, 2023. Those wishing to attend are welcome to assemble at the funeral home on Monday morning beginning at 11 a.m. for a procession, which will depart at 11:30 a.m. Committal services are scheduled at 12 p.m.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Vonda's memory to a charity of the donor's choosing.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.BaskervilleFuneral.com to sign the online guest book, upload photographs, and share Vonda's memorial page via social media.

Funeral services and cremation arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Baskerville Funeral Home in Wilmington.

Viva Jo Jelley

CHANNAHON—Viva Jo Jelley, 75, of Channahon, passed away Sunday, Jan. 29, 2023 at the Lightways Hospice Home in Joliet.

Born Aug. 14, 1947 in St. Clair County, East St. Louis, Viva was a daughter of Clyde Edgar and Elsie Marie (Dreler) Gordon. She was raised and educated in Belleville, IL and on Aug. 28, 1972, she married Bobby Jelley.

A dedicated member of Families of Faith Church in Channahon, Viva enjoyed Bible study, listening to oldies, and watching classic movies. Her life was centered on family, and she cherished the opportunity to care for her loved ones.

Survivors include her husband of 50 years, Bobby; three children: David (Barbara) Jelley, of Harvey, IL; Joe Jelley, of Wilmington and Lisa



Jelley, of Channahon, and two grandchildren, Mikayla Jelley and Matthew Jelley.

Viva was preceded in death by her parents, and one daughter, Amy Lynn Jelley.

Funeral services were held Sunday, Feb. 5, 2023 at Families of Faith Church in Channahon.

Cremation rites were accorded and Viva will be laid to rest in Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Belleville, IL.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.BaskervilleFuneral.com to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Viva's memorial page online through social media.

Funeral services and cremation arrangements were made under the direction and care of Reeves & Baskerville Funeral Homes.

Dr. Leon F. Spanbauer

WILMINGTON—Dr. Leon F. "Span" Spanbauer, 81, of Wilmington and formerly of Coal City and Varna, passed away peacefully at his home on Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2023, surrounded by his family.

He was born on April 12, 1941 in Glassport, PA to Joseph A. and Rhoda L. (nee Ranta) Spanbauer. He grew up in Pennsylvania, later attending St. Vincent's College and Loyola School of Dentistry. Span married Vonda Hanson on July 15, 1967 in Maywood, IL and together they raised a family of three sons. He opened his Coal City dental practice in 1971 and retired in 1999. After retirement, Span worked at the Edgewood Golf Course in McNabb. He was an avid golfer and also enjoyed hunting, fishing and stained glass projects.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Vonda Spanbauer; their sons and daughters-in-law, Michael and Tori Spanbauer, Jeff and Amy Spanbauer and Greg and Stephanie Spanbauer; eight grandchildren: Samantha and her hus-



band, Conner Sayers; Joey Spanbauer, Michaela Spanbauer, Brenden Spanbauer, Abigail Spanbauer, Wyatt Spanbauer, Aidan Bankovic and Andrew Bankovic; one great-grandson, Paul Sayers; his step-sister, Maggie Tyszkiewicz; his brother-in-law, John Hanson and his sister-in-law, Rosemarie Hanson. Also surviving are several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Joseph Spanbauer and Rhoda Spanbauer Kurta.

At his request, cremation rites will be accorded. A Celebration of Life will be held in the summer.

Memorials in Dr. Spanbauer's name may be directed to the Grundy County Animal Control, 310 E. Dupont Rd., Morris, IL 60450.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guestbook at www.ferrarifuneral.com.

Ferrari Funeral Services of Coal City are entrusted with arrangements.

Ida Hall

MORRIS—Ida Isabelle "Belle" Hall, 93, of Morris, and formerly of Wilmington, went home to be with the Lord on Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023. She had been a resident at Park Pointe Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center in Morris.

On Jan. 9, 1930 in Ripley, TN, Belle was one of the daughters born into the large family of Stanley and Laura (Brown) Minner. She was raised and educated in Ripley, and on Sept. 4, 1948, Belle married Fedric I. "Fred" Hall Sr. She was a long-time member of Island City Baptist Church in Wilmington and will be remembered for her love of church and family.

Survivors include children: Fedric "Fred" Jr. (Robin) Hall, of Kankakee; Gail Hall, of Wilmington; Amy (Tim) Suchaczewski, of Somonauk and Mark (Foog) Sritragul, of Thailand; seven grandchildren: Ryan Hall (Fiancé' Cierra Tawney), Zachary Hall, Greg (Marissa) Hall, Jessica Suchaczewski, Samantha Suchaczewski, Isaac Suchaczewski and Nina (Eric) Bronson; five great-grandchildren: Ben and Lucy Hall and Madelyn, Lorelei and Connor Bronson and one brother, Louis Minner, of



Tennessee, as well as several nieces and nephews.

Ida was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Fred Sr. on June 29, 2001; two daughters: Patricia Ann Hall and Sri-Arun Sritragul; son-in-law, James Gavros and many brothers and sisters.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd. in Wilmington on Thursday, Feb. 9, 2023 from 2 p.m. until the time of funeral service at 4 p.m.

Belle will be laid to rest privately on Friday in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood with her late husband, Fred.

Preferred memorials in lieu of flowers may be made as gifts in Belle's memory to a church or charity of the donor's choosing.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.BaskervilleFuneral.com to sign the guest book, upload photos or share Ida's memorial page online.

Funeral services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Baskerville Funeral Home in Wilmington.

Joseph Nyhoff

MORRIS—Joseph "Jay" Nyhoff, 82, of Morris, and formerly of Chicago, passed away Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2023, at his home.

Born Dec. 11, 1940, in Chicago, Joseph James was the son of Joseph James Sr. and Marjorie L. (Powers) Nyhoff. He was raised and educated in Chicago's South Shore neighborhood; graduated from St. Ignatius College Preparatory School; and went on to earn his BA degree from Chicago Teachers College.

On Sept. 8, 1962, Jay married Dorothy O'Kane at St. Phillip Neri Church in the South Shore neighborhood, and together they made a home and raised their four children in Morris. Jay retired following 36 years of employment from the Department of Natural Resources, most recently as the Site Superintendent of Goose Lake Prairie State Park and Heidecke Lake. He was a member of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Morris, was a life member of the Knights of Columbus, and belonged to the Morris Moose Lodge 967. One who loved nature and was proud to have earned his Eagle Scout rank, Jay enjoyed hunting, fishing, watching the birds at the feeders he took care of in his backyard, and tending to his koi pond. Reading was an enjoyable pastime, and he took pleasure in building models, which included both train models and miniature dioramas. The family created many memories traveling domestically with their camper trailer, and nothing gave Jay greater joy than spending time with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, sharing his love of the outdoors with them.

Jay had a passion for his work, and will be remembered for his articles which were published in both the Morris Daily Herald, as well as the local paper in Savanna, IL, when he was sta-



tioned at Mississippi Palisades State Park.

Survivors include his wife of 60 years; their four children: Pamela (Ron) Burton, of Marseilles, IL; Colleen (Michael) Ward, of Morris; Kevin Nyhoff (Darla Rahe), of Diamond and Amelia (Dale) Wren, of Morris; seven grandchildren: Jessica (Mike) Glaser, Nichole Ward, Brenton (Lindsay) Ward, Hollyn Kupiec, Jacob Zahn, Caleb Zahn, and Ellery Burton; two great-grandsons: Landon Kupiec and Hudson Ward; one sister, Mary Catherine Mierlak, of Morris and his brother-in-law, Michael (Nadine) O'Kane, of Thiensville, WI.

Jay was preceded in death by his parents, Marjorie L. Nyhoff and Joseph James and Elsie (Phillips) Nyhoff.

Funeral services were held Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023 at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Morris. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated with Reverend Jason Stone officiating and Deacon Paul Jung assisting.

Pallbearers were: Kevin Nyhoff, Brenton Ward, Ellery Burton, Ron Burton, Mike Ward and Dale Wren.

Green flameless cremation rites were accorded following the services, and he was laid to rest in Mount Carmel Cemetery in Morris.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Jay's memory to Goose Lake Prairie Partners, Inc., 5010 N. Jugtown Road, Morris, IL 60450 or to Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, 600 E. Jackson St., Morris, IL 60450.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto: www.ReevesFuneral.com to sign the guest book, upload photographs, and share Jay's memorial page online.

Funeral services and green flameless cremation arrangements were made under the direction and care of Reeves Funeral Homes, Ltd. in Morris.

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Barge traffic back to normal; lock closures loom

BY DANIEL GRANT
FARMWEEK

Barge traffic is getting back to normal on the lower Mississippi River for what's typically a slower time of the year anyway.

"The water levels are back up to normal south of Cairo versus where it was in September and October," Tom Torretti, of Consolidated Grain & Barge Co., told FarmWeek at the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association's (IFCA) annual convention in Peoria in mid-January. "The low water issue last year was the worst we'd seen since 1988."

The low water issues, which Torette said made parts of the mighty river temporarily look like a creek, snarled barge traffic and caused freight rates to skyrocket in 2022.

Fortunately, barges are moving again and freight rates are coming down as the planting season approaches. Much of the fertilizer and other input products used on Illinois farms arrive in the state via barge.

"After harvest, things slow down and then start picking up around February as shippers move fertilizer up the river system," Torretti said. "Bulk rate contracts out of New Orleans are 15 to 20% higher than a year ago. All our costs are up. But what southbound grain freight values do remains to be seen. They're back to normal for now."

When asked if farmers will have access to adequate supplies of inputs moved on the river this spring, Torretti said, "I think so (based on current conditions and barring spring flooding)."

"The fertilizer industry is so good at what it does, buyers



Photo by Army Corps Rock Island District

A TOW ENTERS the lock chamber moving upstream at Brandon Road Lock and Dam in Joliet. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to close four locks on the upper Illinois River at Starved Rock, Marseilles, Dresden Island and Brandon Road for rehabilitation work from June 1 through Sept. 30.

always get their products," he continued. "Just, maybe not when they want it."

The barge industry added 226 new covered hopper barges to the fleet last year from previous orders, which will help increase the flow of products on the river system.

But, with the current cost of a new covered hopper barge between \$900,000 and \$1 million, the existing fleet of around 11,800 barges likely won't grow much more any time soon.

"Until steel prices come down, we probably won't see many new builds," Torretti said.

Meanwhile, the barge industry faces more shipping issues this spring and summer

— this time of the planned variety.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to close three locks on the Upper Illinois River at Marseilles, Dresden Island and Brandon Road for rehabilitation work from June 1 through Sept. 30. The planned closure for work at the Starved Rock lock has been deferred to a later date, yet to be determined.

"There'll be no traffic at all. You'll have to plan accordingly," Torretti told attendees of the IFCA convention. "We've known about this for two years and been through this before. It is what it is."

The Corps previously closed five locks on the Illinois River at LaGrange, Peoria,

Starved Rock, Marseilles and Dresden Island from July 1 to Oct. 29, 2020, for major rehab and maintenance work.

"The timing of the repairs (this year) is after spring planting and before harvest, so it's probably the best time to do it," Torretti said. "But, when the locks do reopen, it will be a mad dash on all commodities. We potentially could be harvesting grain and will certainly be moving fertilizer to put down for the fall season."

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.

New kids programs

The Forest Preserve District of Will County will host two new programs for kids this month. The first is "Rivers of Color - Winter Greens" Saturday, Feb. 11, from 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. at the Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

Enjoy a short hike and discover the magic of mosses, and then head inside to make

your own plant creation to take home. Free, ages 10 or older. Register by Feb. 10.

On Wednesday, Feb. 15, "Little Explorers - Animals in Winter" will take place at Four Rivers from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Learn about animals in winter with a story, a hike, hands-on activities, crafts and free play. Free, ages 3-5. Register by Feb. 14.



Thank you Alex, the rest of the Baskerville crew and Michelle Clark for orchestrating David's service at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery on Friday the thirteenth of January, 2023. David had always wanted a bagpiper playing "Amazing Grace", and you made it happen Alex. The flag ceremony, taps, special gun salute, and personal care from Michelle Clark helped to honor my loving husband of almost 52 years. Our family and I will be forever grateful.

Matthew, Miranda, Mark, Jonah, Libby, Samuel, MacKenzie and Bonnie Huston

Thank You

Thank you Wilmington Fire Protection Department for your response to my frantic call and for your valiant efforts to revive my husband on February 4, 2023 (and for even putting my groceries in the freezer when I had to hurriedly leave for Riverside). A special thank you to Todd Friddle for your care and compassion. Thank you Donna and Dale Kirk for driving me to Riverside. Thank you to those who gathered around me in the ER and a special thank you for Dr. Lacheta's attention and compassion. Our family has been so blessed by all of the beautiful cards, thoughts, prayers, meals, flowers, kindnesses, donations to David's memorials and love in action (even laundry and housecleaning) of many friends and family. May God bless all of you for your support at this very difficult time.

Matthew, Miranda, Mark, Jonah, Libby, Samuel, MacKenzie and Bonnie Huston and Suzanne and Jim Johnston

Temporary halt for proposed CO2 pipeline

BY ZETA CROSS
THE CENTER SQUARE

A proposed CO2 pipeline through parts of Illinois is on hold.

The Texas pipeline company Navigator has withdrawn its application for a certificate of authority to build a pipeline to carry liquid carbon dioxide through 13 Illinois counties.

Pam Richart, co-founder of the Coalition to Stop CO2 Pipelines, said Navigator has not been able to persuade landowners in Christian and Montgomery counties that a large repository of CO2 can be safely stored under their farms and land.

"Eighty percent of the landowners in Christian County who are in the sequestration area have refused to sign leases," Richart said to The Center Square.

Opponents are working closely with Montgomery County to help people there understand the implications and potential risks of injecting and storing large quantities of

CO2 in neighboring Montgomery County, Richart said.

The goal of the pipeline project is to transport CO2 from 32 different sites across 1,300 miles to central Illinois where the Cambrian-age Mt. Simon Sandstone Formation overlies the Precambrian granite basement of the Illinois Basin. Geologists believe concentrated CO2 can be safely injected underground under the Mt. Simon formation in a saline reservoir where it will take 100 years to calcify. If the CO2 is stored deep under the cap rock in central Illinois, geologists maintain that it will stay there. But there are no guarantees, Richart said.

"We are concerned that they can't guarantee that the CO2 will stay put and not move," Richart said.

People fear the CO2 could leak through the well itself. There could be fractures in the cap rock that are not mapped that will allow CO2 to leak.

"The cap rock may be damaged in the process of high-pressure injection of the

CO2," Richart said.

Leaked CO2 has the potential to contaminate local drinking water, Richart said.

"When CO2 mixes with water, it creates carbonic acid. That releases heavy metals and toxins from underground that can ruin the local water," she said.

If leaked CO2 rises to the surface and changes the CO2 levels in the soil, crop yields could be affected, Richart said.

"Plant roots would not be as strong, or as deep and or as dense," she said.

In Oklahoma and Texas, injection of wastewater in the ground has caused earthquakes, Richart said. Earthquakes would release the CO2 that they want to sequester, defeating the purpose of the effort.

"They say it won't happen here, but why should we believe them," Richart said. "It's happening in places where they are injecting lesser volumes of fluid at lower pressures than they intend to use here."

And there is the question

of the rights of the neighbors, Richart said. One neighbor may agree to have CO2 injected in their land, but the neighbor a mile or two away may not want the risk.

"The CO2 is going to move," Richart said. "The neighbor will wind up with CO2 under his or her property."

Navigator said it intends to file a new pipeline application with the Illinois Commerce Commission this month that would specify what route the pipeline will take. Opponents are anxious to see the proposed route, Richart said.

Goal: draw, color and create your own artwork to express encouragement, positive attitude, funny humor, or just feelings from past memories.



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Drawing by Lucy Rozak



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Gas prices slowly dropping

Local gasoline prices are trickling down as in Illinois saw prices fall 6.3 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.59/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Prices in Illinois are 21.6 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 2.2 cents per gallon lower than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has fallen 5.2 cents in the last week and stands at \$4.60 per gallon.

"For the first time in 2023, the national average price of gasoline has seen a weekly decline, primarily thanks to a sharp and sudden drop in the price of oil," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"While the decline in both gasoline and diesel prices is terrific, it's not unusual to see prices falling in February,

which tends to be the month with some of the lowest gasoline prices of the year thanks to seasonally weak demand.

The lowest price in the area on Monday was \$3.49/g in Braidwood and Wilmington. Coal City stations were \$3.69 to \$3.75/g on Monday.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Illinois was priced at \$3.07/g while the most expensive was \$4.79/g, a difference of \$1.72/g.

"For diesel, we're likely to see more declines, and potentially much more significant in the weeks ahead as imports of distillate have accelerated, leading to a sell off. And, with warmer weather ahead, demand may struggle as well.

"However, especially for gasoline, high levels of coming maintenance and the eventual transition to summer gasoline

could lead today's declines to reverse down the road. For now, motorists should enjoy the decline, but be wary as we're likely to eventually see increases again down the road," De Haan said.

The many benefits of traffic roundabouts

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This formation allows vehicles to avoid a full stop when no traffic is coming,

gracefully making a right turn to enter the circle. This acts to slow the traffic overall but reduces idling and the severity of vehicular accidents when they happen.

The advantages are fewer crashes and less severe crashes, lower vehicle speeds, less vehicle pollution, lower maintenance costs as compared to a traffic signal, increased landscaping opportunities and reducing confusion.

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Own campaign loan backfires for DeVore

State records show that Dan Proft's People Who Play by the Rules PAC spent almost \$36 million during the second half of 2022, mostly on advertising boosting Sen. Darren Bailey's gubernatorial bid and opposing Gov. JB Pritzker.

Of that, \$2.4 million was spent on consulting. Former ABC7 political reporter Charles Thomas was paid \$100,000 in two \$50,000 installments. Thomas appeared in some of Proft's ads praising Bailey.

that reporting, the company is run by Brian Timpona, a longtime Proft associate. I wasn't able to reach Timpona.

Richard Uihlein, who was the principal funder of Bailey's campaign via Proft's PAC as well as some direct contributions, controls a committee called Restoration PAC, which paid Uihlein and an affiliate company well over a \$1 million last year for various services, CJR's Tow Center reported last October.



CAPITOL FACTS
Rich Miller

contributed \$50,000 to Paul Vallas' Chicago mayoral campaign.

DeVore also received a \$50,000 contribution in late September from the Anthony M a r a n o Company (which sells produce to Chicago-area restaurants). The contribution was \$38,000 above the by-then-negated limit.

designed to win. But we pretty much knew that during the campaign itself. He got thumped by Raoul.

DeVore did manage to elevate and give voice to some folks on the far right. Shannon Adcock was a significant DeVore contributor, kicking in \$2,500 during September. Adcock is one of the founders of Awake Illinois, a far-right group that opposed pandemic mandates in schools that has since morphed into firing up moral panic over gays and trans people in schools, libraries and coffee shops. Vallas spoke at one of her events.

And that brings us to Republican Illinois attorney general candidate Tom DeVore.

When DeVore busted the campaign contribution caps in his race last August with a \$250,000 personal loan to his campaign committee, some thought he might be opening the door to large contributions, perhaps from the billionaire Richard Uihlein.

And that's it. \$42K is all DeVore appears to have netted from his cap-busting loan.

There's often an expectation when candidates loan money to their campaigns that they'll spend most of it. Instead, DeVore reimbursed himself almost all of that cash, including a \$200,000 payment on Oct. 14th, even though the campaign was entering its final few weeks, and then another \$15,000 the day after election day.

DeVore is now busily lining up clients to fund a third lawsuit against the state's assault weapons ban at \$200 a person. He raised more than half a million dollars with that same flat fee to fund his first two suits.

Tyrone Muhammed, the controversial founder of Ex-Cons for Community and Social Change, which bills itself as a violence interruption group, was paid \$250,000 for consulting work.

Proft's Starfish Consulting was also a recipient of almost \$535,000.

Instead, all DeVore really did was allow Democratic incumbent Kwame Raoul to take a million-dollar contribution from Gov. JB Pritzker's campaign fund - \$940,100 more than Pritzker could've contributed had the contribution caps been in place. A few labor organizations also contributed sums slightly above the previous cap limit of \$59,900, but it wasn't much.

DeVore reported \$226,072 in contributions starting the day after he loaned himself that money, which was just about \$11,000 more than what DeVore reimbursed himself.

Outside of the loan repayment, DeVore reported spending less than \$142,000 in the fourth quarter, which ended December 31. By contrast, AG Raoul reported spending almost \$1.9 million in the same quarter.

Rich Miller also publishes Capitol Fax, a daily political newsletter, and CapitolFax.com.

But the highest paid consultant for Proft's PAC during the last six months of 2022 was a Chicago company called Salvo Page LLC, which got \$800,000, plus another \$111K for website services.

Salvo Page is not registered as a company with the state of Illinois. The only campaign payments to the company disclosed to the state were made by Proft's People Who Play by the Rules PAC. Google searches turn up nothing. Proft did not respond to repeated requests for comment over several days.

DeVore received a \$10,000 contribution from James Hoeg in late October, which was \$4,000 more than he would've been able to receive had it not been for the caps being lifted (Hoeg, by the way, recently

In other words, DeVore did not run a campaign

Thank You

Library to hold Craft Corner

The Wilmington Public Library will be hosting "Kat's Craft Corner" on the second Thursday of every month from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Kat will gladly teach interested patrons how to knit, or you can feel free to bring your own craft project to work on and enjoy some company.

Congratulations!

Chandler Wuchter

on making the
Dean's List of Scholars
for Fall 2022 at
North Central College!
We are proud of you!

Chuck & Ginger, parents

Support group for people with oral, head and neck cancer

Morris Hospital will hold its next support session for people with oral, head and neck cancer on Wednesday, Feb. 22, from 3-4 p.m. at the Radiation Therapy Center of Morris Hospital, 1600 W. U.S. Route 6 in Morris.

The support group is offered the last Wednesday of each month free of charge. Anyone who has experienced a diagnosis of oral, head and neck cancer and their family members are welcome to attend regardless of where cancer treatment was received.

The support group is led by an oncology nurse from the Morris Hospital Radiation

Therapy Center and is held in collaboration with SPOHNC, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to meeting the emotional, physical, and humanistic needs of people with oral or head and neck cancer and their caregivers. People who attend support groups often share experiences and advice in hopes of helping others cope with their life changing event.

Those planning to attend are asked to register online at www.morrishospital.org/events, or call the Radiation Therapy Center of Morris Hospital at 815-364-8915.

A huge thank you to all who made our Spaghetti Dinner/Wonder Land Camp fundraiser a success.

Wilmington Moose Lodge 241/781, Women of the Moose, Wilmington Moose Riders, Wilmington VFW, The Wine Café, Fox's Pizza, Whitmore Ace Hardware, Mar Theater, El Patron Mexican Restaurant, Rosati's Pizza, Hog Wild, Faletti's Meats, Axe Factor, Al's Steakhouse, Crusade Burger, Southern Belle, Advanced Auto Parts, Babes Tap, O'Reilly Auto Parts, Crew Clips, The Purple Monkey, Audacious Ink, Darla's Deli, Magic Nails, Wilmington Pizzeria, Route 66 Bar, Mancuso Cheese, The Body Shoppe, The Pain & Wellness Group, FOP 94, Trinity Barkery, PMTT, McWethy's, Riverfront Lanes in Wilmington, and many people who donated various other baskets and raffle items.

And to all our volunteers, families, friends and especially all the people who attended and generously donated, we thank you tremendously.

Thank you!!! Thank you!!! Thank you!!!

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Container gardening tips? Hear an expert on Feb. 15

Looking for tips on container gardening? Then you might want to sit in on the next Wilmington Garden Club meeting at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 15, at the Wilmington Park District building, 315 N. Water St. Special guest will be Gary Ward, a master gardener from Lockport who specializes in container garden-

ing. Ward, former president of the Will County Historical Society, will address all container gardening questions during the free event. Garden Club meetings are open to the public and bring a friend. For more information call 815-476-2469.

Morris Hospital hosts community blood drive

Morris Hospital is hosting a blood drive in cooperation with Versiti Blood Center on Thursday, Feb. 16, from 2-6 p.m. in Conference Rooms 2 and 3 on the lower level of Morris Hospital, 150 W. High Street in Morris. Those who donate will be helping replenish the local blood supply as Versiti supplies blood products for Morris Hospital. All blood types are needed. Blood donors must be age 17 or older, weigh at least 110 pounds, be in good health and free from cold or flu symptoms on the day of donation. In Illinois, 16-year-olds may donate with written approval from a parent or guardian. The entire process for donating blood takes about one hour, including registration, a brief medical screening, blood collection and refreshments. Donors should bring a photo ID with proof of age. Those planning to donate should eat a healthy meal and drink plenty of water before donating. Donors may be required to wear a mask while inside Morris Hospital depending on COVID community transmission levels. To schedule an appointment, call Ashley Wagner at Morris Hospital at 815-705-7370. Walk-ins are welcome.

NFL to reduce it's enviromental impact

Dear EarthTalk: What is the National Football League doing to reduce its environmental impact and carbon footprint?

-- Mitch Trevino, Las Vegas, NV

Like any major spectator sport league, the National Football League (NFL) is no darling to environmental advocates. Stadium construction, maintenance and energy use contribute significantly to carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions and resource depletion.

Transportation of fans to games, waste generated during games, and production and disposal of merchandise and equipment can also contribute to environmental harm.

That said, given these points against it, the NFL has made a concerted effort in recent years to reduce its environmental impact, even vowing to become a "net zero" emissions league—meaning it will offset all of its greenhouse gas emissions through a combination of reducing its own emissions and supporting projects that remove or reduce CO2 from the atmosphere—in the near future.

Indeed, the NFL has made a major push to offset CO2 emissions over the past few years, offsetting upwards of 20,000 metric tons of CO2 per year, league-wide.

The leading non-profit Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) is partnering with the NFL on its emissions reduction and offset strategy.

The goal of this unusual partnership is to reduce emissions through improved energy efficiency and the increased use of renewable energy sources.

The league also encourages and promotes sustainability practices—recycling, reducing single-use plastics, and using environmentally-



friendly transportation—at stadiums across the country. And an NFL tree planting campaign also helps reduce the league's carbon footprint.

The league rounds out its emissions reduction strategy by purchasing renewable energy credits to "offset" emissions from energy usage in NFL facilities and events. The league proudly offsets all energy used at major Super Bowl venues.

Waste reduction is also a source of pride for the NFL. Starting in 2019, upwards of 90 percent of the waste generated at and around the Super Bowl was diverted from landfills through recycling and composting.

Likewise, the league has started to take water conservation seriously, implementing low-flow plumbing fixtures and drought-resistant landscaping at various stadiums nationwide, while simultaneously working to educate fans on water conservation through its sustainability outreach program.

Another area where NFL planners have made strides is sustainable building and retrofits, implementing green building practices—such as the implementation of energy-efficient lighting and HVAC systems and the use of recycled building materials in several facilities across the country.

For example, Levi's Stadium, home of the San Francisco 49ers, is LEED Gold Certified and has a 27,000



THE NFL HAS made great strides in the last few years to green up its operations, and will soon become a net zero emissions league.

square-foot green roof (green roofs provide numerous benefits, including stormwater management, improved air quality, energy efficiency, fire retardation and noise reduction).

The NFL isn't the only American sports league fixated on sustainability of late. The National Basketball Association (NBA) has its annual "Green Week" celebration, Major League Baseball (MLB) has its "Green Game" initiative that runs the length of the baseball season, and the

National Hockey League (NHL) has its "Green Initiative" that promotes sustainability year-round.

But the NFL runs the highest profile sporting event on the planet—the Super Bowl—so it has a much larger opportunity to reach fans across the continent and around the world with its messages and examples of sustainability.

EarthTalk® is a 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. Send questions to: question@earth-talk.org.

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Area students named to Uni. of Iowa fall dean's list

More than 7,500 undergraduate students at the University of Iowa were named to the dean's list for the 2022 fall semester. Among those students were Ashley Bollino and Madeline Bollino of Braidwood, Natalie Durham of Diamond, Preston Johnson of Coal City, Amelia Earley and Chloe Sanford of Wilmington.

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- ### CLUES ACROSS
- Functions
 - Records electric currents associated with contractions of the heart
 - Trigonometric function (abbr.)
 - Secret political clique
 - Type of gibbon
 - Nocturnal S. American rodent
 - Famed American playwright
 - Mesopotamian goddess
 - Abba __, Israeli politician
 - Long ridge of gravel and sediment
 - A place to stay
 - Actor Idris
 - One who behaves in a rebellious way
 - A way to measure movement
 - Distinguish oneself
 - Type of drug (abbr.)
 - Basketball great Baylor
 - Masses of salivary matter
 - Calls balls and strikes
 - Plant that grows along the ground
 - A recreational activity in the air
 - Consumes too much
 - Island nation
 - Pistol
 - Mixtures of soul and calypso
 - Ancient Greek City
 - Similar
 - Roughly trimmed tree trunk used in a Scottish game
 - Semitic fertility god
 - Born of
 - Frogs, toads, tree toads
 - School in the northeast (abbr.)
 - Soviet Socialist Republic
 - "__ the Man" Musical, baseball player

- ### CLUES DOWN
- Fiddler crabs
 - Discount
 - Partner to "flows"
 - Ethnic group of Laos
 - Beloved "Seinfeld" character
 - Book of tickets
 - The last name of "Hermione"
 - Type of TV package
 - Helps to heal a cut
 - Town in Galilee
 - Actor Horsley
 - "Hocus Pocus 2" actor Ed
 - Bird-loving group (abbr.)
 - They respond when someone is sick
 - Emerged
 - Midway between south and southeast
 - Monetary unit of Afghanistan
 - Unit of work or energy
 - Indicates near
 - Famed river
 - For each
 - News organization
 - CNN's founder
 - They __
 - Areas off to the side
 - Satisfies
 - A spare bed
 - Legendary singer Diana
 - Frothy mass of bubbles
 - A kind of sorcery
 - River in South Africa
 - Philippine Island
 - County in China
 - S. American plant
 - Beverage containers
 - Edge
 - Protein-rich liquids
 - Moved quickly on foot

CRYPTO FUN

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to infants. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 18 = A)

A. 25 18 9 21 20 21 11 22
Clue: Keeps child calm

B. 19 5 18 23 1 11 26
Clue: Provides warmth

C. 9 22 18 14 5 11
Clue: Sleeping spot

D. 19 21 19
Clue: Protects clothes

Answers: A. pacifier B. blanket C. cradle D. bib

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to babies.

FITNAN

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Answer: Infant

Guess Who?

I am a singer born in Mississippi on February 11, 1979. I grew up in a family of musicians. My younger brother is a performer as well. I gained fame on a hit TV series in the 1990s.

Answer: Brandy

ALL ABOUT BABY WORD SEARCH

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Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

BABY
BASSINET
BATH
BOTTLES
BOUNCER
BURP CLOTH
CARRIAGE
CARRIER
CAR SEAT
CRIB
DIAPERS
HAT
MOBILE
MONITOR
ONESIE
PAJAMAS
RATTLE
SLING
SPIT
SPOONS
STROLLER
SWADDLE
SWING
TOYS

COMET SPORTS

Lady Comets get their 15th win with regionals up next

The Reed-Custer girls picked up their 15th win of the season Monday beating Streator, 35-18.

RC played a great game and led from beginning to end. Brooklyn Harding led the Comets with 12 points, 2 assists, and 2 steals.

Laci Newbrough had a double-double (11 points and 11 rebounds) along with 1 assist and 1 steal. Natalie Flores added 6 points and 6 rebounds. Caelan Cole had 4 points, 8 rebounds, 2 assists, and 1 steal.

Sam Sprimont had 2 points, 4 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 steal, and 1 block. Addison Harms had 3 rebounds and 1 assist. Gwen Stewart added a steal.

RC ended the regular season 15-15, 9-5 in the ICE conference. As the #7 seed in the Wilmington regional they will host Beecher (12) on Saturday at 1 p.m. for the first round of regionals. A victory would advance them to 7:30 p.m. game on Monday in Wilmington against Seneca (4). If they win that contest they will play for the championship on Thursday at 7 p.m. in Wilmington.

Edge the Lady Coalers

The Lady Comets picked up a huge conference win Thursday on Senior Night against Coal City, 39-36. The game was neck in neck the entire game.

After three quarters, RC was down 24-23 and turned

around and scored 16 huge points in the 4th quarter to seal the win. Leading the way for Reed-Custer was Kaylee Tribble with 12 points, 6 rebounds, 3 assists, 1 steal, and 1 block. Brooklyn Harding added 10 points, 2, rebounds, 1 assist, and 1 block. Caelan Cole had 9 points, 3 rebounds, 2 steals, and 1 block.

Laci Newbrough had 6 points, 6 rebounds, and 2 steals. Sam Sprimont had a team high 8 rebounds, 1 steal, and 2 points. Gwen Stewart chipped in 1 rebound, 1 assist, and 1 steal.

"Thank you seniors for all your hard work and dedication to the program over the last four years!" coach Shelby Zwolinski said.



Photo by Zadi Sims

THE LADY COMETS celebrate a win on Thursday when they upset Coal City 39-36. It made for a special Senior Night for the home fans. Reed-Custer (#7 seed) now enters regional play, hosting #12 Beecher on Saturday. The winner will play Monday at 7:30 p.m. in Wilmington against #4 seed Seneca.



Photo by Zadi Sims

DRIBBLING THE BALL around Coal City is Junior Kaylee Tribble playing on Thursday at home.



Photo by Zadi Sims

ADDISON HARMS finds someone to pass the ball to on Thursday's game against Coal City.



Photo by Zadi Sims

BROOKLYN HARDING dribbles the ball around Peotone on Thursday.

Comets romp 'Cats to win seven straight

The Reed-Custer varsity boys basketball team has won seven in a row, most recently defeating Wilmington, 69-40, on Friday.

The visiting Comets shot a blazing 25-for-55 from the field and were 11-for-11 at the free throw line to oust the 'Cats. Reed-Custer made eight three-pointers as they built a 21-7 lead after one quarter and 36-11 margin my half-time.

Wilmington was out-rebounded 32-23 as the Comets were too tall underneath.

Wes Shats led Reed-Custer in scoring with 18 points and had seven rebounds. Lucas Foote and Jake Reardon had 13

points each and five rebounds. Foote also had three assists and one steal.

Collin Monroe contributed nine points, one steal and one block. Jace Christian had five points and three rebounds. Josh Bohac scored four points and had three rebounds. Connor Eggleston had three points and two rebounds. Jake McPherson and Cooper Smith each had two points.

The victory improves the Comet record to 22-4 overall, 10-2 in the conference with two ICE opponents left—host Coal City on Friday and at Streator Tuesday.

Down the Blue Devils

The Comets avenged an earlier loss in the season, this time beating Peotone 63-51 on Wednesday at home.

The Blue Devils gave Reed-Custer their first loss of the season back on Dec. 16 when the Comets were 5-0. Peotone upset them 56-45.

But this time it was a win on their own terms, leading 28-25 at the half before going on a 35-26 run in the second half to put them away for good.

Jake McPherson led the Comets with 21 points, four assists and four rebounds. Wes Shats followed with 15 points and had a great defensive

game with 11 rebounds. Lucas Foote had 12 points, four rebounds and two assists. Jace Christian had a great game with 11 points, six rebounds, five assists and two steals. Josh Bohac and Jake Reardon each had 2 points.

Free throws count

Last Monday Reed-Custer won a close one against El Paso Gridley, 60-56.

The Comets trailed 22-15 in the opening frame but took the lead 23-22 by half-time they would relinquish it from then on, making 11-of-19 free throws to hold on for the win.

Wes Shats paced the Comets with 19 points and 10 rebounds. Jace Christian had a team-high with 11 rebounds while scoring 14 points. Lucas Foote shot four three-pointers to finish with 13 points, five rebounds and three steals. Jake McPherson had 11 points, five rebounds and three assists. Josh Bohac chipped in three points, two rebounds, eight assists, two steals and a block.

Lady Panthers sweep Bradley

The Reed-Custer 8th grade volleyball team won against Bradley on Thursday, 25-6 and 25-20. Alyssa Wollenzien had seven aces and three kills. Mackenzie Foote had four aces and two kills. Kirstin Klein had three aces, two kills, and a nine consecutive serving streak. Kayla Schott had three aces.

Taylor Bova had a block and an ace. Brooklyn Krasner had two aces.

The 7th grade volleyball team won their game against Bradley. Peyton Landgraf had 8 aces and 2 digs. Kamryn Wilkey had 1 kill, 1 dig and 2 aces, Adalyn Steichen had 3 aces. Madalynn Marshner had 2 kills and 2 aces,

Mackenzie VanWinsen had 4 aces, Olivia Barbush had 1 kill. Lastly, Kadence VanDuyn had 2 digs and 2 aces. "The girls played a great game against Bradley," said coach Lauren Cunning.

The 8th grade volleyball team lost to Manteno Tuesday, 13-25 and 11-25. Mackenzie Foote had three kills and three digs. Alyssa Wollenzien had two blocks, two kills, and an ace. Taylor Bova had two aces and one kill.

The 7th grade volleyball team lost to Manteno, 11-25 and 14-25. Peyton Landgraf had two digs and two aces. Kamryn Wilkey had one dig and one kill.



Photo by Alyssa Ohlund

BENCH SUPPORT—Reed-Custer's Jake Reardon pumps his fists after another three-point shot was made during a 69-40 rout over Wilmington.

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Comets advance eight to sectional

Coal City High School wrestled up to expectations Saturday during the Reed-Custer regional capturing the team title with ease.

The Coalers (286.5 points) crowned eight regional champions, had three place in second and three third. All Coalers who wrestled advance to the Coal City Sectional on Friday and Saturday.

Reed-Custer finished second in the team standings with 161 points, advancing two champions, four runners-up and a pair of third place finishers.

Champions for the Comets were big men Kody Marschner (220) and Gunnar Berg (285).

Marschner (37-1), a senior, won by fall :34 over Matthew Stone (Herscher, 5-19) He then stuck Brody O'Connor (Clifton, 22-21) in just 0:22 seconds. Marschner then pegged Coal City's Drake Dearth (33-7) in 2:58 to claim the title.

At 285, Berg (36-4) was just as impressive. He pinned Brody Benson (Wilmington, 17-14) in 0:25 seconds before getting a 6-2 decision over Noah Gomez (Clifton, 41-8). To decide first place, Berg nailed Michael Gonzalez (Coal City, 22-6) in :28 to earn the crown.

Placing second for Reed-Custer were Sam Begler (132), Jeremy Eggleston (138), Landon Markle (160) and Rex Pfeifer (170).

Begler (8-2) won by fall 1:47 over Gerrit Osenga (Herscher, 23-13). He then pinned Clifton's Kayden Cody (27-15) in 0:54 to face Jake Piatak (Coal City) in the championship. Begler battled hard in the first period before suffering a 3:10 fall to settle for second.

At 138, Eggleston (34-8) got a bye in the opening round. He then pinned his Clifton opponent in 3:11 before suffering a 4:41 fall to Brant Widlowski (Coal City, 18-1) in the title



AT 160 POUNDS—Reed-Custer's Landon Markle (right) made it to the regional championship bout before settling for second place with a 5-4 to Carter Watkins from Manteno. Markle will get a chance to avenge himself Friday and Saturday when he advances to the Coal City Sectional.

Courtesy photo

bout.

At 160, Markle (14-2) nailed Ethan Pfeiffer (McNamara, 20-14) in 3:32 before upsetting

Asher Hamby (Seneca, 35-5) with a 4-2 decision. He then faced Carter Watkins (Manteno, 27-6) who won it 5-4.

Pfeifer (41-6) won by 2:42 fall over Garron Perzee (Clifton, 29-18). He then shutout Collin Wright (Seneca, 37-11) by 6-0 decision. In the match to decide first place, Derek Carlson (Coal City) 34-5 won by 3:57 fall over Pfeifer.

Placing third and advancing to the sectionals at Coal City on Friday were Comets Maxymilian Lichaj (120) and Dominic Alaimo (182)

Lichaj (19-15) started with an 8-2 decision over John Meneses (Peotone, 13-17). Dylan Crouch (Dwight, 30-7) won by fall 2:32 over Lichaj. But give him credit for pinning Avery Phillips (Seneca, 5-2) in 3:49 before winning a 10-8 decision over John Meneses (Peotone, 13-17).

Alaimo (27-17) got a first round bye before sticking Herscher's Quintin Strahan (14-17) in 3:16. in the semifinal - Hunter Hull (Clifton, 31-6) won by 11-2 major decision. Alaimo won by fall over Landon Venecia (Seneca, 23-25) in 5:20) before claiming the third place match over Jackson Bergeron (Peotone), 7-2).

Other Comets who wrestled but did not place include 113-Jayden Sanchez (12-19), 126-Kristopher Budick (17-20), 145-Jason Davis (11-22) and 152-Aiden Shultz (11-17).

Champions for Coal City included 106-Culan Lindemuth, 113-Brody Widlowski, 132-Jake Piatak, 138-Brant Widlowski, 145-Mataeo Blessing, 170-Derek Carlson, 182-Braiden Young and 195-Joey Breneman. Coming in second place were Coalers 120-Aidan Kenney, 220-Drake Dearth and 285-Michael Gonzalez while placing third were 126-Brock Finch, 152-Landin Benson and 160-Jack Poyner.

Wilmington, in seventh place with 50 points, qualified two wrestlers for sectional.



Courtesy photo

GETTING THE PIN at 220 pounds on Saturday to become the regional champion is Reed-Custer's Kody Marschner. He will advance to the sectional this weekend with hopes of placing in the top four to make it to the state finals.



Photo by Zadie Sims

WINNER OF THE MATCH is Dominic Alaimo who finished in third place during the 182-pound regional on Saturday. Alaimo advances to the sectional at Coal City.

E-tickets must be purchased online for wrestling sectional

Coal City High School, 655 W. Division St., will host the IHSA Class 1A Individual wrestling sectional on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 10-11.

On Friday the preliminary-quarterfinal round will start at 5 p.m. Then at 9 a.m. Saturday the first round of wrestlebacks will be at 9 a.m.; 10:15 a.m. will be the semi-finals and 2nd round of wrestle backs; then at 11:45 will be the semi-final wrestlebacks. Lunch break will be 12:30 p.m. Finalist line-up and introductions at 2 p.m. with the finals; session 2 at 2:15 p.m. Times are subject to change.

Doors will open 45 minutes before wrestling begins. E-Tickets must be purchased at <https://gofan.co/app/school/IHSA>. Tickets are \$7 per session with three different sessions:

session 1 - Friday night, session 2 - Saturday morning until approximately 2 p.m.; and session 3 - the finals, after 2:15 p.m.

The gym will be cleared after session II on Saturday

A video can be watched on how to buy tickets at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkZqTY5d6Bg>.

For IHSA wrestling info visit www.ihsa.org/Sports-Activities/Boys-Wrestling/State-Series-Information-Results

For questions on the sectional contact CCHS Athletic Director, Dan Hutchings at dhutchings@coalcityschools.org.



Courtesy photo

REGIONAL CHAMPION! Reed-Custer's Gunnar Berg (left) claims the title at 285 pounds on Saturday, beating Coal City's Michael Gonzalez with a :26 fall. Berg and seven other teammates advance to the Sectional in Coal City on Friday and Saturday.

GODLEY PARK DISTRICT'S

Sweeties Dance

FEBRUARY 11
6:30 - 9:00 PM

GRADES 1ST - 8TH
\$5 PER CHILD
(PAID AT DOOR)

For security purposes, parents must come into the building to pick up their child after the dance.

GODLEY PARK DISTRICT
500 S Kankakee St. | (815) 458-6129 | www.godleypark.com

WANT TO SEE YOUR TEAM REPORT HERE?

SEND STATS TO
sports@fpnusa.com