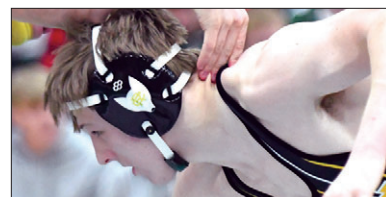




RCMS lauds the head of the class

Comet wrestlers advance to state



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Braidwood coalition focused on funding

Grant applications in the works to help keep BAHCC solid

BY MARNEY SIMON EDITOR

The Braidwood Area Healthy Community Coalition (BAHCC) is gearing up for additional activities, services and planning, starting with a plethora of grant applications that will hopefully help bring cash into the organization to help it stay afloat over the next several years.

On Feb. 13, coalition members

met for their regular monthly meeting, discussing the grant application process for a handful of specific funding opportunities, including the hopeful extension of the federal Drug-Free Communities (DFC) grant.

The coalition was first awarded the DFC grant in 2018, and is currently in the last of the five years of funding.

The DFC Support Program provides grants up to \$125,000 per year for five years to community coalitions to strengthen the infrastructure among local partners to create and sustain a reduction in local youth substance use. After five years, community coalitions may re-compete for another five-year cycle.

The Drug-Free Communities Support Program, created by the Drug-Free Communities Act of 1997, is the Nation's leading effort to mobilize communities to prevent youth substance use. Directed by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), the DFC Program provides grants to community coalitions to strengthen the infrastructure among local partners to create and sustain a reduction in local youth substance use.

The goal of the grant funding program is to establish and strengthen collaboration among communities, public and private non-profit agencies, as well as federal, state, local, and tribal governments to sup-

port the efforts of community coalitions working to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth.

"We are doing our best to look at sustainability and to look at ways to continue the awesome work we're doing even without grant dollars," project coordinator Pete Dell'Aquila said. "But we're pretty hopeful that we'll receive year six through 10, but I think it's a really good time to take a look at what programs are [working] and what we may need to re-evaluate."

The coalition currently has roughly \$30,000 on hand, which is utilized to fund activities, staff, and overhead. Additional grant funding will help pay for each of those activi-

ties, however, staff positions are not guaranteed with year six through 10 of the DFC grant.

Dell'Aquila noted that the merits of the application are based in part on the strengths of the coalition, and what they bring to the community.

"One of the strengths that I'm most proud of is our ability to [secure funding and programming] that our grant dollars can't fill," he said. "We're a prevention organization, so prevention is one piece of the puzzle when it comes to helping an individual with their journey with substance use. So, we can only do so much in the prevention level, but I think we can do a

SEE BAHCC, PAGE 2



Courtesy photos

LEARNING FROM THE PROS — Braidwood residents taking part in the Citizens Police Academy leaned about DUI and other traffic stops during their class last week. The academy is presented by the members of the Braidwood Police Department as part of outreach efforts, to get the community to learn more about their local law enforcement agency and how officers spend their time day to day on the job.

BPD, citizens get to know each other

BY MARNEY SIMON EDITOR

The Braidwood Police Department's Citizen Police Academy is only a few weeks in.

But it's already helped the department educate members of the public on what they didn't know that they didn't know about the police, all while having a little bit of fun on top of it.

The class is a head-to-toe look at the police department, what officers do from the start of a shift through the end, and not just traffic stops and arrests.

Braidwood Police Chief Todd Lyons said the class, which kicked off at the start of this month, is just part of an overall plan for officers to create connections with the community.

"We were just kind of trying to come up with ideas for a community outreach pro-

SEE BPD, PAGE 2



BRAIDWOOD RESIDENT GREG Boyer gets a feel for just how dangerous it can be to drink and drive, utilizing special goggles used in training. Officer Adam Beaty instructs Boyer on what happens during a DUI stop during the Citizens Police Academy class last week.

Cameras help nab suspected car thief from Minnesota

BY MARNEY SIMON EDITOR

The increase in Flock Safety cameras as a tool for local law enforcement has helped the Braidwood Police Department nab an alleged car thief from Minnesota.

On Feb. 7, around 11:30 a.m., the Braidwood Police Department received an alert from one of the city's our Flock cameras that a stolen vehicle was in the area of Kennedy Road and Hickory Street.

According to the police report, the vehicle was a 2008 Black Cadillac Escalade, with a Minnesota registration plate.

After a brief investigation, Willie McDaniel of St. Paul Minn., was taken into custody for possession of a stolen vehicle, possession of a controlled substance, and a warrant for a parole violation out of Minnesota.

McDaniel was charged through the Will County State's Attorney's Office for Possession of a stolen motor vehicle and possession of a controlled substance.



WILLIE MCDAMIEL

He was transported to The Will County Adult Detention Facility, where he was later given a \$10,000 bond.

McDaniel is due back in court on Feb. 28.

It's the latest use of the Flock safety cameras for law enforcement, but Braidwood Police Chief Todd Lyons said that in addition to a crime fighting tool, the cameras are useful for overall community safety.

"Right now it's a great

SEE FLOCK, PAGE 2

Coal City site among top 10 prime for development

BY ANN GILL EDITOR

GRUNDY COUNTY — Coal City's Inland Rail Park is prime for development, listed as one of the top 10 megasites in the state of Illinois.

The 1,470-acre industrial zone on the southwest corner of Broadway and Reed Road is among two Grundy County sites listed at the top by Intersect Illinois, the state's leading non-profit economic development organization.

Megasites are large tracks of land that are ready for development and Inland comes with a Union Pacific rail spur, access to municipal water and sewer, it's less than

two miles from Interstate 55, and there is adjacent land available for expansion. Additionally, the land is part of an enterprise zone and tax increment financing district.

Intersect Illinois works to identify sites ready for development and promote them across the country and around the world.

Coal City Village Administrator Matt Fritz met with the organization last week

SEE SITE, PAGE 3



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Cosmo firing up the Comets



Photo by Zadié Sims

THE CHEER TEAM gives Cosmo a lift during half-time of Friday's boys basketball game between Reed-Custer and Coal City. The Cometswon 60-47 to set up a rematch in the first round of the Seneca regional when Reed-Custer, the # 5 seed, will again host the Coalers, the #9 seed, on Saturday at 1 p.m. The winner of that game will travel to the Seneca regional semi-final on Wednesday, Feb. 22 at 7 p.m. against either Wilmington (#11) or Bishop McNamara (#3).

Flock

tool," Lyons said. "Let's say someone's dad has dementia, and they're missing. We can find them. That's really, truthfully the best of everything right now. If someone comes in and they're missing, or there's a crime in another town but they come through Braidwood, we have these plate readers."

The city is on of several local communities all over Will County that utilizes the cameras. Both Wilmington and Braidwood have cameras that were paid for through a special program from the Will County State's Attorney.

Developed first in suburban Atlanta

by a resident of a Home Owners Association in an attempt to capture the culprits who had burglarized several cars, the cameras have now become a nationwide law enforcement tool. The cameras can assist law enforcement in proactively preventing crime by sending real-time alerts to law enforcement when a stolen car or known wanted suspect from a national crime database enters the jurisdiction. When any type of disturbance or crime is reported, a review of the camera date can yield the license plate or plates of those responsible.

Flock cameras allow police to search by vehicle make, color, type and license plate, to identify the state of the license plate, to capture temporary plates, vehicles with a missing, covered or paper plate, unique vehicle details like roof

racks, bumper stickers, and even vehicles without plates.

Lyons noted that a recent murder in Morris, as well as a murder last year in Elwood, were both solved with the assistance of the cameras.

"It's such a great tool," he said, adding that the city of Braidwood will soon place a camera near the campus of Reed-Custer Middle School and High School.

"It's phenomenal having them by the schools," Lyons added. "It makes people feel safer."

Flock Safety cameras are in use in Braidwood, Wilmington, Shorewood, Lewis University, Beecher, Elwood, Homer Glen, Manhattan, and Mokena, among other jurisdictions in Will County, across Illinois, and across the country.

BPD

gram, and it was something that I've wanted to do for the last couple of years. We just were finally able to get it implemented," Lyons said.

The class meets one day a week, and participants go over police procedures with officers, from firearms training to traffic stops and everything in between.

"We used our firearms simulator," Lyons said of the most recent class. "We had our range instructor go through some shooting simulations, and don't shoot."

Lyons said the department was able to purchase firearms simulation software with American Rescue funds distributed during the covid, which allowed the department to update their training even during the worst of the pandemic.

"We're one of the few small departments that actually has that," Lyons said. "It has over 900 scenarios, and the instructor can change the outcome of the scenario, for example from a traffic stop, whether they reach for a gun or they reach for a phone. They can change the outcome and then how your behavior is, what your commands are. So, they got a taste of that, and it seemed like they really had fun with that."

Lyons said the simulator can be an eye opening experience for the participants, who get a chance to see how officers have to react in the moment to potentially life threatening scenarios.

The classes also teach the ins and outs of basic traffic stops, from what officers have to do from the time they hit the siren all the way through a possible citation or even arrest.

"We had our officers go over traffic stops and DUI, and then we went out back and had them do a mock traffic stop using your safety and your approach," Lyons said. "We had them wear the DUI goggles, the field sobriety test. It seems like we're getting a lot of positive feedback, and the officers are enjoying it."

Up next for the class, they'll go over police K9 procedures, which will include demonstrations with K9 Officer Phil Tyree and Nuke.

"If possible, we like to end each class with some firearms situations and use of force, shoot don't shoot, just to keep it interesting."

Lyons said the class overall is something that every participant can benefit from, as they not only learn to identify with the skills needed to be a police officer, but also how they can connect with Braidwood's officers in a positive way.

"They're just getting an understanding of our policies and procedures, and why we do what we do. I think it is just something that educates the public so they understand law enforcement," the chief said.

Lyons noted that most people don't have the opportunity to interact with police officers very often, so only associate the police with handing out speeding tickets or investigating crimes that the public generally is not aware of.

"A lot of times, if they don't have a family member or someone they know in law enforcement, they're only seeing what they see from the media," Lyons said. "The only view that they're getting is what they see on TV, the media, or TV shows, which a lot of the time is unrealistic. I think it just gives our citizens the opportunity to meet our officers and get to know us in a more intimate setting. Not just on a call."

Lyons said the class is highly interactive, where participants are encouraged to dig in, ask questions, and interact with all the instructors. And, he said, the hope is to make it a regular thing.

"We hope it grows, I think we're just going to do it once a year, but we hope it grows," Lyons said.

The chief said the long term goal would be to add a similar class but for local youth. Lyons said that often, without a friend or family member in law enforcement, younger generations don't think about a career as a police officer.

"I coach in town, and I'll mention to some of the kids, hey what do you want to do for a career, have you ever thought about law enforcement?" Lyons said. "They maybe have never had anybody in their life say, you know what, how about being a policeman. So, one of the things we'd like to add to the plans, we'd like to have a police academy for younger kids in the summer, maybe for high school and middle school age where one day a week for six weeks in the summertime they can participate."

BAHCC

lot and we have been, and I'm really proud of the programming. But every day we have things that come up, we have needs for intervention services and even further for people in recovery. So, what we're looking at this year is to promote our partnerships and the way that we've been able to reach out outside of our grants and tap into like-minded individuals and organizations to help fulfill our mission of keeping our communities safe and drug free."

The DFC year six through 10 grant has some two main goals: Strengthen collaborations through the community, and reduce substance use.

Fund matching requirements will increase for years six through 10, which means the coalition will have to match 125% to 150% of funding throughout the five years of the grant extension, which is done through other grant funding and in-kind donations.

"We have a pretty good grasp on the in-kind donations, so this isn't as scary as it might be for other organizations," Dell'Aquila noted. "We're well poised in this area."

The BAHCC will have to show it works with representatives across 12 sectors of the community to reach its goals, including local governments, law enforcement, schools, youth, media and civic/fraternal groups.

The coalition will also show how they address multiple issues, focusing on alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and prescription drug use, as well as individual and environmental strategies that are most effective for long term, community level change that impacts and benefits the most people.

Dell'Aquila said there are only 100 awards available for years six through 10.

The grant application will also detail how the BAHCC evaluates its own performance and effectiveness, as well as the organization's capacity to implement its programming to benefit the community by identifying personnel and roles, and recruitment and retention of members, especially youth.

"This grant has been so instrumental to getting us to where we are today," Dell'Aquila said. "It's been a challenge, but it's been well worth it... We're here, and I think we've accomplished a lot."

In addition to seeking years six through 10 of the DFC grant, the coalition has several other grant applications in the works, partnering with other behavioral health services or prevention organizations in an

effort to pursue those monies. The BAHCC partners with 515 Fitness from Coal City, which provides mental health services through the combined use of cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness, yoga, art therapy, music therapy and play therapy.

The organization also partners with the Will County Substance Abuse Initiative, which helps train and provide recovery coaches, which helps reach the goal of a continuum of care for those dealing with substance use disorder.

The BAHCC has applied for a United Way of Will County community grant to assist with activities and efforts in partnership with 515 fitness. That grant will provide more than \$17 million in grant funding across dozens of organizations across Will County.

The coalition has also applied seeking funds through the Will County Comeback program, which will utilize dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act. Those grant dollars would also be applied to activities with 515 fitness, as well as help to maintain the BAHCC office space on Reed Street.

"Right now our office space is covered through the Drug-Free Communities grant, so if we don't land years six through 10, we won't have funds for an office," Dell'Aquila said.

As the organization continues to work on community partnerships, recruitment, and bringing in more youth members, Dell'Aquila said he and members are still able to maintain a high level of services for prevention, behavioral health, and assistance to those with substance use disorders.

"I'm so proud of it, we keep finding solutions to this problem," Dell'Aquila said.

The BAHCC operates on grant funding, donations and volunteer work to achieve the coalition's objectives of recruitment, retention, increasing youth involvement, sustainability plans, and increasing local resources for substance use prevention.

In addition to providing community resources, the BAHCC also hosts a community garden outside its center on Reed Street, sponsors students who attend the Cebrin Goodman Teen Institute, and holds workshops on mental health with community partners including 515 Fitness from Coal City.

The coalition also works with the Will County Rapid Response Team to distribute Narcan to local community, supports the Text-A-Tip line in partnership with the Wilmington Coalition, and hosts the bi-annual drug takeback event, among other community activities.

Happy President's Day



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Education scholarships are now available

The Illinois Retired Teachers Association (IRTA) awards scholarships throughout the state to students in college who are enrolled in a Teacher Certification Program. Applicants must have and maintain at least a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale. In 2023, awards can be earned from four sources, each with varying requirements.

The IRTA awards six \$2,000 scholarships throughout the state to incoming juniors and seniors in college who are residents of Illinois or are graduates of an Illinois high school. They may attend college in any state as long as the school attended maintains an accredited teacher-training program.

The Helen Kennedy Scholarship awards one \$2,000 scholarship to an incoming sophomore, junior, or senior enrolled in a recognized college or university. Applicants must be a graduate of an Illinois high school and have declared a major in education.

The Rose Sandstrom Scholarship awards a \$2,000 scholarship to an incoming senior who is a graduate of an Illinois high school. Applicants must have a declared major in physical education and be enrolled at Monmouth College or Western Illinois University.

The Moler-Austin Scholarship awards two \$4,500 scholarships to Kendall County high school graduates who will be entering their sophomore, junior, or senior year in college as declared education majors.

All scholarship information and applications are available on the IRTA website (www.irtaonline.org) under the Foundation tab or by contacting the IRTA office at 1-800-728-4782. The application deadline is March 7, 2023. Recipients will be announced at the end of April 2023. This notice is provided by the Grundy County Retired Teachers Association.



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Eric D. Fisher, publisher
Marney Simon, editor

Politics during hard times in Braidwood, March 1897

1897 was a year of turmoil. Miners across the country were on strike, or about to be. Gold was discovered in the Klondike sending hundreds of thousands of would-be miners to the Yukon and beyond. Money was scarce, as were jobs.



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

In March we read, "J. M. Carson, of the United Mine Workers of Illinois will address the miners of Braidwood tonight at Free Gardner's hall." and "Robert Crichton went to Chicago this morning to try and get money from the company he represents here to pay off their miners who demand their wages before doing more work."

This was the age of the break-up of the huge monopolies in Braidwood in March. "The Populists of the Town of Reed and City of Braidwood will hold their town and city caucuses in Delvenne's hall on Thursday evening, March 18, 1897, at 8 o'clock p.m. for the purpose of placing in nomination persons to be voted for at the ensuing town and city elections for the various offices to

robber barons, who were living lavish lifestyles on the backs of the common worker. It is no wonder that the Populist Party, also known as the People's Party came to the forefront. The Populists were a left-wing party who tried to

be at that time filled." "All persons who favor the adoption of the Omaha and St. Louis platforms: among the planks of which are the following: The free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the present legal ration of 16 to 1. Government issue of all supplemental paper money, made a full legal tender. Government ownership of railroads, telegraphs and telephones. A graduated income tax and postal savings bank. Lands now held by railroads and other corporations in excess of their actual needs should be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only. All are cordially invited to attend and especially those silver Republicans who are anxious for a government of, by

and for the whole people. By order of Committee, Braidwood, Ill., March 6, 1897." The Republican slate was as follows: "Town Ticket - For Assistant Supervisor - Andrew Dalsell; For Town Clerk - William Willkinson; For Assessor - Anthony Culley; For Collector - John Faletti; For Justices of the Peace - V. Terando, D. Francis, J. McArthur, R. Chrighton, R. Bonie; For Constables - T. E. Moore, R. Cox, S. D. B. Lines, J. L. Murray City Ticket - For Mayor - D. S. Barr; For City Clerk - J. Ferguson; For City Attorney - John Stansbury; For City Treasurer - L. Fraca; For Marshal - Joseph Harrop; For Police Magistrate - R. Crighton" The Populists only took two offices at the election, and so it was business as usual. Even the railroad was down-sizing. "P. J. Cooney

night operator at the C. & A. depot, was notified yesterday morning that his services would be no longer required, and to report at Lockport for work, as the office here was to be closed up after the 6:40 train had passed." "It seems as if an ill omen of some kind was hanging over Braidwood. They were not satisfied with taking off some of our train facilities, but now relieve us of our night man, and make it necessary for people who wish to go on the early trains to buy their tickets the night before." "Now it is time our city council would take hold of this matter. Some time ago they released the bell man at the crossing on Main Street, and now it is left unguarded, with great danger to life. Chapter 32, section 13 of our city ordinances provides for the erection and maintenance of suffi-

cient safeguard at such crossings. "Now, if the C & A railroad company has no sympathy for the welfare of our city, our city council and mayor should do their duty and force the company to put in the necessary safeguards wherever they are needed within our city limits." "Now we hope that the council will have the interests of the city at heart, and investigate this matter. While the councils from the neighboring towns who were affected by the removal of the accommodation, petitioned the company to have the same put back, our council sat quietly at home and made no effort whatever, as if the matter were of no consequence. We will hope to see them take some interest in this matter."

RCMS celebrates students at 4.0 breakfast



REED-CUSTER MIDDLE School held its 9th annual 4.0 Breakfast for students. 11 Eighth Grade students were recognized for attaining high academic achievement for their efforts in earning a minimum of a 4.0 GPA through 2.5 years, or 10 quarters of middle school course work. Students include (from left): Mackenzie Foote, Kirstin Klein, Reese Brown, Grace Barry, Lucas Walsh, Nathan Trucano, Taylor Bova, Ellie Adams, Hailie Compton and Gillian Byrley. Not pictured: Logan Bean.

RCMS names Ace winners for January



REED-CUSTER MIDDLE School announced the Ace winners for the month of January. Students included (from left): Brayden Wandless (8th grade), Corbin Stahl (6th), Hayden Garcia (7th), Caidence Kuchar (7th), and Caysie Esparza (8th).

Coal City considering addition of EV charging stations

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

The selling of electric vehicle may have gotten a jolt during 2022, however charging and range concerns continue to hold off new car buyers from moving to electric. On average, an EV can travel 250 miles on a single charge. So a driver heading from Coal City to St. Louis should be able to reach the Gateway Arch without a sec-

ond charge. But a motorist heading from St. Louis to Chicago would need to pull off the interstate for a boost right around Coal City. Currently, the closest public charging stations along Interstate 55 are located in Dwight and Joliet, but that could change as the village of Coal City is looking to add a couple of stations. While attending the Illinois Municipal League [IML] conference last fall, the

village clerk obtained some information about EV stations and it was passed along to the mayor. "I think this is where things are going," Mayor Terry Halliday said. While he believes it could be some time for the masses to be driving EVs, those who do will need a place to re-charge. He forwarded the information onto the village administrator and some inquiries were made. Now the city is reviewing a proposal from DirtRoad, a division of Carbon Solutions Group, to install two charging stations in public spaces within the village. The administrator presented the company's proposal to the Village Board. DirtRoad would offer both subscription and instant charging. "This model allows the capital to be recouped by the investment group while Coal City hosts the development at no cost. After the stations exceed the utilization model to ensure proper return on investment for DirtRoad, Coal City shall be provided additional profits made available within the profit sharing from additional usage," city administrator Matt Fritz said. The company would

invest and maintain the infrastructure at their cost. "We don't pay for the installation, we have a say in where they are installed, there is no loss if revenue doesn't cover and if it does, we share revenues," Halliday said. While not opposed to charging stations in town, Trustee Dave Spesia suggested taking some time to investigate to ensure the village is getting just the right company. Trustees agreed to table any action with the DirtRoad proposal to allow for additional review. Should the village decide to move forward with the proposal, Fritz noted there are still several steps that must be taken. "Should you positively respond and want me to move forward two things will happen. Their team will come out and get into specifics of engineering as to where specifically the locations of the charging stations would occur and where the power will come from, and they would provide us the agreement and terms," Fritz said. Although the proposal has been tabled indefinitely it is expected to be revisited at an upcoming meeting.

Site

while attending the Illinois City County Managers Association [ICMA] conference in Bloomington. "We have one of the rated megasites in the state and we're on the short list of about eight throughout the state. Coal City is on their radar of landing some industrial clients," Fritz said. The administrator's meeting with the organization came days after Gov. JB Pritzker announced the creation of a megasites development grant program that will provide \$40 million to boost the creation of these development sites. "Major job creators are consistently looking for investment-ready sites. They can get up and running in a short amount of time and Illinois is home to some of the largest such sites in the country, all ripe and fresh for development," Pritzker said. "The new Megasites Investment Program grants will help communities innovate their own business attraction efforts and will spur economic development in communities across our great state," he added. The competitive grants are open to private entities, non-profits and local governments to cover site development expenses ranging from roads, electricity and water to broadband, remediation and land acquisition. Grants, funded through the Rebuild Illinois Capital Fund, will range from \$250,000 to \$5 million with the award determined by acreage—up to \$5,000 per acre. One of the goals of the

state grant program is to attract job creators and revitalize underutilized areas. "As companies act on needs to ramp up large scale production quickly, the availability of sites that can handle their requirements—from electricity, to water, to rail access—is critical to winning deals. We're fortunate to have many quality sites in Illinois and are working to make sure they are ready for companies to set up rapidly," said Intersect Illinois CEO Dan Seals. Intersect Illinois has just over a dozen Grundy County sites listed with Inland Rail Park and NRG—the former Collins Generating Station—located on Pine Bluff Road in Goose Lake Township being among the state's top 10 megasites. The concept for Inland was presented to the village a decade ago with the understanding its financial support would ensure quick development. The village invested in the project, however the project did not go as proposed and the land—with the exception of the spur the village invested in—remains vacant. Early on in the development of Inland, the state had promised funds to construct the interior rail and assist in covering the cost of needed roadway improvements. But all that was put on hold when Bruce Rauner took over as governor and the funding eventually fell through. There has been a change in ownership of the land and renewed efforts to get the site developed. What will come from the top 10 listing by Intersect or if the new state grant program will be used to boost development is not yet known.

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March 2, 2023, 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.
March 3, 2023, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

After March 3, 2023, kindergarten registration will be by appointment only. Contact the office at 815-458-2145.

Required Documentation for Registration
You must have the documents listed below to register.

1. ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE (Courthouse issued document) Your child must be 5 years old on or before September 1st, 2023 to register.
2. Proof of Residency - See requirements below.

Residency Requirement for Registration

If you own a home, you will need:

One document from this column	Two CURRENT documents from this column
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mortgage statement • Property tax bill • DEED 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility bill—may be gas, electric, water/sewer, phone/cable • Bank or credit card statement • IL Driver's license or State ID (must be valid with current address) • Vehicle registration • Pay check stub

If you RENT your home, you will need:

One document from this column	Two CURRENT documents from this column
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility bill—may be gas, electric, water/sewer, phone/cable • Bank or credit card statement • IL Driver's license or State ID (must be valid with current address) • Vehicle registration • Pay check stub

If you LIVE WITH SOMEONE, you will need:

- A letter from the resident stating that you and your student(s) live with them. It must include the address, date and names.
- The person writing the letter MUST supply the required documents above depending on whether they OWN or RENT their place of residence.

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Guns again

WILMINGTON—It seems, that most individuals apprehended or charged with a firearms offense have some sort of criminal record and a previous ban on having firearms in their possession. Yet, these criminals frequently obtain and use firearms even with the imposed bans. So is it these criminals, like Boy Scouts give their pledge to be good citizens and all is good? My question is, who oversees these individuals when bail is granted? The days of the "Wild West" don't appear to be over.

Balloon watch

SHADOW LAKES—You know who I am. I cannot believe that our military that is so under-educated that it took a civilian spotting this balloon from China. Covering the United States to call the government. Where is NORAD?

No scientific proof

WILMINGTON—This is to the caller from Diamond who gave a lengthy dissertation of their religious beliefs. The key word being beliefs. These are not facts as there is no scientific proof of the existence of god. If you want to believe no one is stopping you but you can't force me to buy into the childish, superstitious nonsense you listed just because you say so. Being an Atheist can get abuse from the angry, hateful Christians. Don't you remember the Klan is a Christian organization. I'd like to close with a couple of quotes. First from Bertrand Russell "to be fair to Satan we've only heard Gods side of it." And from Ambrose Bierce "religion is a daughter of hope and fear explaining the ignorance the nature of the unknowable." I hope this helps.

State of the Union

COAL CITY—The State of the Union address by President Biden was on the News Feb. 7th. But I personally didn't watch the President on the news so I didn't have to listen to him tell us how great everything is going. I had more fun watching paint dry on the walls instead of having to listen to a man that stole classified documents from Congress and committed an act of treason when he was a Senator.

Distracting America

BRAIDWOOD—First it was one balloon the Air Force shot down. Then it became two and now four unknown objects that have been shot down over the past two weeks. China is denying the first one was a spy balloon; we don't know about the rest. That's because I believe it's all a conspiracy by President Biden and his friends in China. What better way to distract the people of his own country than having four unknowns shot down. He comes out looking like a hero by having ordered the balloons be shot down. How is it we've never heard of these balloons invading our airspace during the past four presidents when suddenly there are four under Biden? I'm telling you it's all being planned by Biden as a distraction so we forget about all the things the progressives are pulling.

The loudmouth shrew

WILMINGTON—"He is the most corrupt president in American history." I already knew this about Trump but it was Trump himself saying this about President Biden. Then I saw Marjorie Taylor Greene screaming "Liar. Liar." at the State of the Union address when President Biden said some Republicans wanted to cut some Medicare and Social Security. How is that a lie when Republican Rick Scott has already suggested it? She later said "I don't clap for liars." Yet she claps endlessly for Trump. She is a loudmouthed, attention-seeking, classless shrew who blackmailed McCarthy into getting premier committee assignments.

Meet the candidates

BRAIDWOOD—One of our local political groups is hosting a Meet the Candidates night on March 1 at the Main Street Banquet Hall. While a very nice venue, seating is extremely limited for an event of this type. During the last Meet the Candidates night held there in 2020 it

was extremely cramped and tightly packed due to the amount of attendees. Many people complained that it was quite warm and uncomfortable to say the least and that was with only having candidates for our city council participating. Now they're adding in school board candidates as well which will only add to the problems experienced during the last one. Why not hold it on the stage at the Reed Custer auditorium like it had been a few times in the past? Plenty of room, attendees can space out if they'd like and there's already a speaker system in place so the people won't struggle to hear what's being said. If the auditorium is unavailable for the selected date, how about one of the three school gymnasiums? If it's a matter of the school district charging for use of the facility maybe the school board should waive the fee as it would be benefiting all residents of the school district as well, not just the city of Braidwood. We all know that the politics of our small town is a tightly wound fuse. Packing that many politically opinionated people into such a small space and then shaking them up is just a recipe for disaster. Will people be turned away if the current selected venue reaches fire code capacity? That would be a real shame.

Revaluation needed

WILMINGTON—Since the Wilmington Area Historical Society became the owner of acreage of property last year the museum will now have a revenue each year around \$21,000 a year. Maybe it's time for the city of Wilmington to re-evaluate their current lease. Maybe it's time for the Wilmington Area Historical Society to start paying their way by paying the utilities and paying more rent. It's time the taxpayers not to be responsible for these debits since the museum is making an income. The museum has a lease with the city of Wilmington paying \$1 per year for use of the old city hall. The city of Wilmington owns the building. They also pay all the utilities. It's the taxpayers' hard earned money that's paying these bills. It's time for the city to revisit and review its lease with their tenant since the museum has this type of income. Maybe they can afford to buy their own building like they did the Eagle Hotel before they lost it due to a fire. It's your tax money. I think it would be appropriate for the museum to pay their fair share of expenses and give the taxpayers a break for once and not depend on taxpayers' money to support the Wilmington Area Historical Society. Food for thought.

Just a housekeeper

WILMINGTON—I have been a housekeeper just shy of 10 years. Once the Covid 19 pandemic struck, I, without hesitation, worked seven days a week. I worked alongside all the other long term care workers who chose to put themselves at risk and continue to work just like all the psws and the nurses. However, I am just a housekeeper. I am just the person who cleans up the mess others leave behind. I open the curtains the others don't have time to open to bring sunlight to residents. I am just the housekeeper who made sure your loved one's room was in order. I am just a housekeeper who greets your loved one every day and tries to bring a smile on their face. I am just a housekeeper who tries to help support residents, help clean up after residents and make their little room home. I am just a housekeeper who had to go into every single outbreak room during the pandemic. I am just the housekeeper who was never mentioned during the pandemic. I am just a housekeeper so I didn't receive a wage increase or was recognized by the news or the government or the owners of these money hungry greedy nursing homes. When long term care is in crisis mode because they have no staff I am just a housekeeper who was bounced around to different departments when I was needed in order to help the nursing home function day to day. I am just a housekeeper who would get home from my shift and the phone would ring for me to go back to work to work in a different department. I am just the housekeeper who helped the entire pandemic - where I contracted Covid and brought it home exposing my family. I am just a housekeeper



"SIR, IT'S TOM CRUISE. HE WANTS TO FILM HIS NEXT MOVIE HERE... TOP GUN: MAVERICK POPS A FEW CHINESE SPY BALLOONS."

who is trying to pay my bills. I am just a housekeeper who contributes to a privately owned nursing home as much as I possibly can. I am just the housekeeper who tries to help provide the tasks a resident needs. I am just the housekeeper who was forgotten about the entire pandemic. I am just the housekeeper who this week was notified the government is no longer funding the financially greedy nursing home I work at. As a result, I am just the housekeeper who is now being given six shifts every two weeks to survive. I am just the housekeeper who showed up the entire pandemic for the residents and for my coworkers just to be completely disposable in the end. I am just a housekeeper begging the government to end for profit nursing homes. I am just a housekeeper begging somebody to care about all the staff working in long term care. I am just a housekeeper asking for six shifts every two weeks. I am just a housekeeper begging the ministry to take over and fire all the inadequate people in charge of nursing homes. I am just a housekeeper who works weekends and holidays, outbreaks just to get her hours cut in the end. I am just a housekeeper who would love to thank the management team and owners of the for profit home I work at for showing me just how unimportant and disposable I am to long term care. I am just a housekeeper who essentially wasted the last decade working in long term care for absolutely nothing.

Anyone but Trump

COAL CITY—Does anyone know of a political group I can donate to that will support any Republican but Trump. I think if there was a fund created in America to elect anyone but Trump it would grow by millions of dollars before the next election.

Far from over

MORRIS—President Biden announced in January that the U.S. will provide 31 American-made Abram tanks to Ukraine-Russian War a cost of \$400 million. The Ukraine Troops will receive tank training outside Ukraine. Best decision, we sure don't need World War III because we, the USA became involved with our troops in the war. So far \$45 billion tax dollars have been given to Ukraine War and it's far from over.

Address immigration

MORRIS—Are you all aware of all the American Indian organizations requesting monies for food, water, clothing, schooling, etc.? At Christmas time we received at least five requests from five different American Indian organizations for help financially for their loved ones. It's unbelievable in 2023 arrogant President Biden and VP Harris's State of the union message was like trying to sell manure to the farmers. Not one word about illegal immi-

gration mess. Two more years of this upside down world he put us in.

Bless you

MORRIS—Regarding the article in the Feb. 8 Sound-off from someone in Diamond, "No Christian is hateful," your article was beautiful. God bless you.

About love

WILMINGTON—With Valentine's Day here I would like to share the two things I know about love. First, the one who loves the least controls the relationship and second, the opposite of love isn't hate. It is indifference. Penny Lane

Their time is up

BRAIDWOOD—In response to the person who keeps calling into Sound-off telling of the great acts of the tiny little town of Braidwood's current administration who is probably someone from the administration. They are basically all a bunch of crooks. What in the name if anything good is going to come from three dealerships in this town? Nothing. All that is doing is putting money in their pockets because it's bringing in tax money and nobody in this town is ever going to see it and they know who they are. When you drive through this town it is a business graveyard. It's time to remove these leeches who are sucking the life out of good hardworking, paying taxpayers. They also intimidate people because if you speak your mind there will be pay back. Is that how you want to live in this town? It's time for the old guard to get on out and bring on the new guard.

Bait and switch

WILMINGTON—I hope the voters are paying attention to the bait and switch the Republicans are currently engaged in. Before the midterms all we heard about was the border, inflation, gas prices, food prices and especially egg prices. Now going into the 2024 campaign Republicans have no plans to solve any of those problems because that isn't what they do. Their mantra is government doesn't work and they have to make sure it doesn't. So now they roll out abortion, TRT, trans kids and their parents, drag queen performances including story hours and any other ways they can make their constituents hate and fear the Left. You notice it doesn't cost them anything to promote anger and then put a bounty on private citizens to entice the rabble to violence. I don't know how any of that is going to help the country but I think that is the point. These people are cruel and habitual liars. Why wouldn't George Santos run as a Republican? So when they say they are not going to get rid of Social Security and Medicare remember they sit in rows of the law. Liars.

New Mendota wheat mill ramps up supply in northern Illinois

BY DANIEL GRANT
FARMWEEK

The addition of the largest, newly built wheat mill in the U.S. three years ago near Mendota certainly added to demand for the crop in northern Illinois and other regions of the country.

And farmers responded to increased demand and strong global prices for wheat, according to Joe Greene of Archer Daniels Midland Co. in Decatur.

Greene serves as the commercial director of milling and baking solutions for ADM Carbohydrate Solutions. He discussed the market and ADM's state-of-the-art wheat mill in Mendota during a recent interview and private tour of the facility.

"Since we came to Mendota, we've truly seen an increase in wheat acres in the area. We expected that to happen and it's following through for sure," Greene said.

"Global prices are helping to continue to support that increase in acres," he said. "We're very well situated to continue to provide farmers a fantastic outlet for locally grown wheat."

ADM's massive wheat mill in Mendota essentially replaced a much older facility in Chicago. The new mill has the capacity to produce a whopping 3 million pounds of flour per day, equivalent to 60 semi truckloads.

The mill maintains ADM's markets for flour from the Chicagoland area and northwest Indiana to northwest Ohio, southern Wisconsin and northeast Iowa.

The fully automated mill also features a loop track system to unload 110-car unit trains. Wheat unloaded from the trains moves on underground conveyors into the mill for testing and processing.



Photo by Daniel Grant of FarmWeek

ADM'S WHEAT MILL in Mendota has the capacity to produce about 3 million pounds of flour per day. The soft red wheat used at the facility is sourced from northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin while hard red and spring wheat are shipped to the plant via trains.

Nearly all the soft red wheat processed at the mill is sourced from northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. The mill's multifaceted logistical capabilities also allow for the sourcing

of hard red wheat, mostly from Kansas and Nebraska, along with spring wheat from the Dakotas and Minnesota.

"We're supporting local farmers with about

one-third of our production here on a daily basis and we continue to support other areas," Greene said.

"Mendota is well situated in northern Illinois to have access to local soft red wheat crops as well as our unit train unloader that allows us to bring in shuttles of wheat from the Southern Plains on the hard red wheat side and from the Northern Plains on the spring wheat side."

What is all the flour from the ADM mill used for across the upper Midwest? It depends on the wheat class and protein levels of each crop.

Flour from soft red wheat is typically used to bake items such as cakes and cookies. Flour from hard red wheat is used for breads and bagels while different blends of wheat flour are used for batterings, breadings, tortillas and frozen pizza among other items.

"It's all about how each flour performs in the oven," Greene said.

The mill provides farmers with other key opportunities. It produces about 22% mill feed, which goes into local markets for livestock feed.

And the unit trains which bring wheat to LaSalle County are reloaded with corn, which is shipped from northern Illinois to feed yards in destinations such as Texas and California.

"This helps maintain successful farming operations going forward," Greene said.

Since opening the Mendota mill in 2019, ADM Milling also achieved carbon neutral status, which it passes on to consumers and farmers through sustainability programs that offer payments per acre for locally-grown crops.

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.

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Wilmington Freemason's chili cook-off seeks entries

The Wilmington Freemasons Lodge #208 will be having their 13th annual Chili Cook-Off to fund the Pedals for Progress program on Sunday, Feb. 26 from 1 p.m.

to 4 p.m. Tasting and a bowl of house chili \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids over 11 and free for kids 11 and under. There will also be \$1 hot dogs available. Wilmington Masonic Lodge is located at 311 Main St., Wilmington. Think you have what it takes to be the Chili King? Register to be a contestant. Call Ben Stickel 815-370-7331 or Matt Lohmar 815-210-9606.

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Augustana College fall dean's list

Augustana College announced area students named to the dean's list for the 2022-23 fall semester. Students earning this academic honor maintained a gpa of 3.5 or higher on a four-point scale. Local students include Casey Crompt, of Braidwood and McKenzie Hennessy, of Coal City.

In honor of the Chiefs' victory, try a Kansas City Ice Water cocktail

Congratulations, Kansas City Chiefs! For the second time in four years, you are Super Bowl champs! This is the third Super Bowl victory for the Chiefs, but the 6th championship for the franchise. The Chiefs franchise won three AFL championships before the AFL/NFL merger, and the first of those was won as the Dallas Texans in 1962.

Chiefs fans have some celebrating to do, and every indication points to more celebration in the future as the sports media begins to apply the "dynasty" label to the Chiefs.

2022 was more than an MVP season for quarterback Patrick Mahomes as he became the first QB this century to win both the MVP and a Super Bowl.

The previous 8 attempts to win both the Super Bowl and the Most Valuable Player award in the same season came up short, Kurt Warner was the last to do it for the St. Louis Rams in the 1999 season.

There will be KC barbeque, beer, more beer and barbeque, a run on Patrick Mahomes jerseys, a parade, and plenty of Kansas City Ice Water, or "KC" Ice Water.

Kansas City Ice Water is popular throughout the Midwest, and nobody is exactly sure where the drink was invented.

Many mixology historians swear that the drink was invented in Iowa, others lean toward Wisconsin as lemon-lime soda tops several drinks from the Badger State.

One thing is certain: Kansas City embraced this drink and has made it a part of nearly every tailgate, game day party, and backyard barbeque.

Here's what we know about the KC ice water: It's easy to prepare, easy to drink, and could be mistaken for ice water (depending on the quality of the local water).

The KC Ice Water is a perfect tailgate accessory because the measurement of ingredients does not have to be overly precise. The drink will still taste great with a little more gin, less vodka, too much lime, etc. It would be difficult to make this one taste bad.

However, there are ways to elevate your KC Ice Water from good to great.

In the KC Ice Water I prefer traditional London Dry gin over the botanical-heavy, complex gins. If you want to

spice up your KC Ice Water with some unique floral notes and botanicals, use Bombay Sapphire Gin in place of a traditional London dry gin.

It is strictly a matter of personal preference. Many of the bars that tend to serve a younger clientele use Bombay Sapphire while bars of the more traditional "dive bar" variety use Beefeater in the KC Ice Water.

In the tailgate setting it can be a challenge to haul dozens of limes to the pre-game party, but make every effort to use fresh lime juice as opposed to the stuff in the green squeeze bottle. Fresh is best, every time.

Any quality unflavored vodka will work in the KC Ice Water. If you have a favorite vodka, use it. I use the standard Smirnoff red label in any drink that calls for vodka.

The soda component of this drink will spark some debate, although the "official" soda of the KC Ice Water is Sprite. Sometimes club soda is used with fresh lemon and lime juice, but Sprite from a soda gun is more than likely topping the majority of KC Ice Water served in the bars



around Kansas City.

A store brand soda will also work in the KC Ice Water, as long as that soda is lemon-lime soda.

I prefer cans of soda when mixing drinks as soda from the can tends to hold a bit more carbonation than soda from the bottle. Once a large bottle is opened and closed a few times the "sparkle" or carbonation tends to decline.

Preparation is simple and straightforward. Ice in the glass, followed by gin, vodka, and fresh lime juice. Top with soda, and serve. That's all there is to it.

Here's to you, Kansas City! The Kansas City Ice Water is built and served in an Old Fashioned glass.

Fill glass with ice, and add:

- 1 oz. London Dry gin
- 1 oz. vodka
- Juice from 1 lime (.75 oz)
- Top with Sprite or other lemon-lime soda, at least 4 oz.
- Garnish with lime wedge
- Until next week, enjoy responsibly.

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Pritzker signs measures ahead of budget address

BY NIKA SCHOONOVER
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD – Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed 15 bills into law, tackling policy areas from tourism to prison reform and making it easier for people previously convicted of felonies to legally change their name.

The laws passed the General Assembly in their recently concluded lame duck legislative session in January, and Pritzker's signature came less than a week before his budget address, scheduled for Wednesday at the Capitol.

Tourism districts
House Bill 268, effective immediately, creates a framework for local governments to increase funding for local tourism projects in collaboration with hotels by creating local tourism districts.

Hotels can qualify for these tourism districts if they can shoulder half of the pro-

posed costs. If petitioning hotels are approved, they can charge up to a 5% rate per-room per-night that will go toward a fund overseen by a state-certified local tourism bureau.

State Senator Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, a lead sponsor on the bill, said the law will help create additional resources for tourism promotion, while giving more control to business owners in the state.

"Tourism Improvement Districts put business owners back in the driver's seat to direct marketing spending and spur growth," Feigenholtz said in a statement. "The additional revenues generated by these special districts will be one more tool businesses can use to draw visitors to all corners of the state."

In order to qualify, hotel owners must file a petition outlining a district plan including the boundaries of the proposed district, the

length of the proposed term and a brief description of the proposed services and improvements they are requesting. They must also show they can pay more than half of the costs that will be taken on by the district.

The post-pandemic measure is an attempt at spurring economic growth as local communities continue to bounce back from the effects of COVID-19.

"The tourism and hospitality sector is the second-largest employer in Illinois," Feigenholtz said. "Tourism Improvement Districts will enable regions of our state to use this additional tool in an effort to recover from the pandemic and bring visitors back to Illinois."

Life sentence for those under 21

House Bill 1064, which takes effect Jan. 1, 2024, changes parole requirements for individuals convicted before they are 21 years old.

Under the new law, if those individuals are sentenced to a term of life in prison, they are eligible for a parole review after serving 40 or more years of their sentence.

Cars and vans as school buses
House Bill 1688, which goes into effect July 1, allows cars, vans and other first division vehicles to operate as school buses with a permit from the secretary of state. First division vehicles are classified as those designed to carry no more than 10 people total, according to the Illinois State Board of Education.

Additionally, by Jan. 1, 2024, the secretary of state and Illinois State Board of Education would be required to create a course for individuals operating these vehicles as school buses.

The course will be offered in conjunction with ISBE and the state's regional superintendents of schools.

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Fertilizer demand expected to grow this year

BY DANIEL GRANT
FARMWEEK

The supply of fertilizer is improving around the world following shocks to the system last year.

And the timing of the buildup is critical as fertilizer demand is expected to grow this season, according to BK Morris, senior markets editor, fertilizers, for CRU Group.

"The driver for prices will be from demand, not so much from supply," Morris told attendees of the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association's annual convention in Peoria.

Fertilizer prices, of course, skyrocketed to historical highs last year as the war in Ukraine and a reduction of Chinese phosphate exports crippled



Photo by Illinois Farm Bureau photographer Catrina Rawson

A PREDICTED BOOST in corn acres this spring along with an 11% increase in winter wheat seedings could drive fertilizer demand.

the supply chain, along with numerous other factors.

Morris looks for Russia to export around 2 million tons of nitrogen fertilizer this year, up from just 800,000 tons in 2022. He also looks for increased fertilizer exports from China, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, among other locations into the global market, which should ease the overall supply strain experienced last year.

Elsewhere, new urea production is coming online in Nigeria.

"A lot of countries are getting production back out in the global supply chain," Morris said.

"Fertilizer affordability is improving," he noted. "But reluctance to pay high prices remains."

Morris believes fertilizer prices will generally soften this year compared to last year, although high-priced inventory at some locations is slowing

the process. But price spikes are still expected to occur during the peak seasons this spring and fall, but likely nowhere near the same levels experienced in 2022.

"Given where prices have been, there's a lot of room to go down," he said. "There's nothing to stop people from going back to normal production rates."

Morris believes tight crop supplies and strong prices will incentivize farmers in the U.S., South America and elsewhere to plant more acres and try to maximize yields.

CRU projects U.S. farmers could plant around 92.5 million acres of corn this spring, up from just 88.5 million in 2022. Soybean plantings this season could be similar to last year – 87.4 million acres.

If realized, the boost in corn acres along with an 11% increase in winter wheat seedings could drive fertilizer demand.

"There's going to be a lot of crop production," Morris said. "We will see lower (fertilizer) prices, although there will be peak periods. Of all products, nitrogen has the most downside potential this year."

Fertilizer prices in Illinois as of mid-January were steady for anhydrous ammonia (at a range of \$1,190 to \$1,490 per ton) and urea (at an average of \$710), according to the Illinois Production Cost Report.

Average prices in the state declined from the previous two weeks for liquid nitrogen (to \$614 per ton), diammonium phosphate (\$831), monoammonium phosphate (\$852) and potash (\$714).

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Courtesy photo by: Gary Channey

MIDWIN HORTICULTURIST Jennifer Durkin and Kala Soto Martinez take a close-up look at compass plant at the USDA Forest Service's Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Students can apply through March 14 to be part of the 2022 Youth Conservation Corps for eight weeks this summer at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

Midewin to host a summer youth employment program

High school students can apply through March 18 to be part of the 2023 Youth Conservation Corps for eight weeks this summer at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. The YCC team will assist with projects that are essential to restoring land where the Joliet Arsenal was active, including trails maintenance and invasive species management. YCC is a national summer youth employment program that provides high school students with opportunities to explore career opportunities in natural resources. Students participate in work projects and learning opportunities. YCC students earn minimum wage and will learn from the environment they will be working in as well as take part in various educational field trips. "The Youth Conservation

Corps program is an excellent opportunity for young people to experience the great outdoors while learning and contributing to the goals and objectives to restore land, increase natural habitat for prairie species of all kinds and help enhance our recreational opportunities that are offered to the public," said Acting Prairie Supervisor Jim Seyler. "We are excited about the 2023 season and the hope for a new team to be focused and engaged in rewarding and meaningful projects." The 2023 YCC application form is available online at tinyurl.com/6rma6895. Completed application forms can be emailed to SM.FS.Midewin_RSVP@usda.gov; or mailed to this address: USDA Forest Service, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, 30239 Highway 53, Wilmington, IL 60481. Each student must also

provide a teacher letter of recommendation along with his or her application. Eligibility requirements applicants must:

- Be at least 15 years of age at the start of enrollment and must not reach age 19 before completion of the program.
- Be a US citizen or permanent resident of the United States, its territories, or its possessions.
- Provide or be able to obtain a work permit as required under the laws of the applicant's home state.
- Provide a valid U.S. Social Security number or have applied for a valid Social Security number.
- Be able to fulfill the essential functions of the assigned work with or without a reasonable accommodation.
- Be actively committed and willing to complete the assigned work project.

Too much of a good thing

We've all taken acetaminophen from time to time. Medical experts say it's one of the best medications for treating pain and helping fight fever. But taking too much acetaminophen can lead to big trouble if you're not careful. More than 600 products contain acetaminophen, including Tylenol, Benadryl, Robitussin, Sudafed, and TheraFlu, among others. "It's one of the most common over-the-counter medications that's been marketed for years as one of the go-to meds when you're having discomfort," says Dr. Mirza Ali Khan, a family practice physician at OSF HealthCare. "That's why people are so familiar with it versus Advil and Ibuprofen, which is a whole different type of medication." According to Dr. Khan, the recommended dosage for a healthy adult with normal liver function is 4,000 milligrams (mg) a day, which, for reference, is equal to eight Extra Strength Tylenol pills. "Too much acetaminophen can be quite dangerous," he says. "It can affect the liver and that's why you want to be

careful. The signs include confusion, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and, if that's happening and you are taking acetaminophen, you need to be seen urgently rather than waiting." According to the National Institute of Health, 56,000 people visit the ER every year due to acetaminophen toxicity and 500 will die. A Kansas City woman recently made headlines when she experienced stomach pain and began taking Tylenol daily for weeks. She became sicker and was rushed to the emergency room where she eventually fell into a coma. The 29-year-old woman had acetaminophen poisoning and ultimately needed a liver transplant. After a difficult year-long recovery, she's back to work and slowly returning to her normal lifestyle. "What I always tell my patients is no matter what you ingest - food or medicine - there are two ways it's going to get through your body," says Dr. Khan. "It's going to go through the kidneys or the liver. Taking too much acetaminophen can cause the liver to malfunction where it does-

n't work and that can cause toxicity." Call 911 immediately if the person suspected to have taken an overdose of acetaminophen is unconscious, semiconscious or not breathing. Dr. Khan says if someone is experiencing severe symptoms, such as confusion or abdominal pain, they should get to the hospital within 24 hours. The treatment plan includes N-acetylcysteine (NAC), which is an antidote for toxic acetaminophen overdose and is usually given by mouth. "The bottom line is acetaminophen is a good medicine," Dr. Khan says. "Obviously, if you're taking one or two once in a while that's okay, but if you're using it consistently it's good to check with your primary care. Say 'I've been taking so many daily. Is this safe for me to do or is there something else I should be doing?'"



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All students welcome

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Melissa's Closet & Crystal's Jewelry Box has dressed over 4,207 students for prom

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OBITUARIES

Hilda Vandegraft

WILMINGTON—Hilda Vandegraft, 72, of Wilmington, passed away unexpectedly on Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 at Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee. Born April 17, 1950 in Savannah, GA, Hilda Ann was a daughter of Herbert Lloyd and Julia Ruth (Hammond) Turner. She was raised and educated in Savannah; graduated from Herschel V. Jenkins High School with the class of 1967 and went on to earn her Associates in Nursing in 1969 from Armstrong State College School of Nursing. On Aug. 2, 1970, Hilda married Robert Vandegraft in Savannah, and together they resided in Charleston, IL; Lockport, IL and in Resthaven, IL before settling to Wilmington, where they established in their current home.

Hilda's career was in healthcare, and over the years she held employment with Charleston Hospital, Sunny Hill Nursing Home in Joliet and Royal Willow Nursing Home in Wilmington. Most recently, Hilda worked as an Agency Nurse, as well as in the Private Duty Sector before formally retiring. Hilda was a member of the First United Methodist Church in Wilmington, as well as the Wilmington Garden Club, which she was very active in over the years, serving as president. She enjoyed being part of many community activities which included the Garden Club, Christmas Home Tours and Pairs and Spares. Hilda was proud to have hosted Wilmington's only Southern Cotillion in the family's back yard, where everyone had a ball, and in her younger years she took pleasure in boating, water skiing, camping, and being active in her church and community. She was talented not only in the garden, but also in sewing and quilting. Hilda recently found herself entrenched watching Blue Bloods and Yellowstone, but her primary focus always remained centered on family and the time she was able to spend with her loved ones.

It was apparent that Hilda had an eye for beauty and loved all things flowers. She also had a passion for butterflies as they were a reminder of rebirth, no different than being saved when we are reborn through Christ. Hilda Ann Vandegraft may be gone from our sight, but she leaves a priceless collection of memories, and will continue to live on in the hearts of those



who knew and loved her.

Survivors include her husband of 52 years, James "Robert" Vandegraft; three children: Angela (Michael) McFarland, of Gulf Shores, AL; Wade (Candice Thomas) Vandegraft, of Fairbury, IL and Laura (Jason) Stava, of Temecula, CA; five grandchildren: Colton (Brooke) Wollenzien, of Chebanse, IL; Nicholas Stava, of Temecula, CA; William McFarland, of Gulf Shores; Thomas Vandegraft, of Fairbury and Victoria McFarland, of Gulf Shores; two sisters, Cheryl (David) Smith, of Richmond Hill, GA and Melanie Turner, of Savannah, GA; one brother, Charles (Dana) Turner, of Andersonville, TN; brother-in-law, Richard Vandegraft, of Gladstone, OR and one sister-in-law, Dolores Vandegraft, of Custer, WA; numerous cousins and several nieces and nephews, including Porter Turner, of Andersonville, TN.

Hilda was preceded in death by her parents, Herbert and Julia Ruth Turner; father-in-law and mother-in-law, Thomas and Alice Harris; nephew, Robert Vandegraft; brother-in-law, Donald Vandegraft and sister-in-law, Mary Vandegraft.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd. in Wilmington on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023 from 11 a.m. until time of funeral service at 1 p.m. Pastor Harriette Cross from the First United Methodist Church in Wilmington will officiate, and burial will follow in Oakwood Cemetery in Wilmington.

Pallbearers will be: Colton Wollenzien, Nicholas Stava, William McFarland, Thomas Vandegraft, Jason Stava and Michael McFarland.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Hilda's memory to: St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

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

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

Alene Kitchell

GROVE, OK—Virginia Alene (House) Kitchell, 98, of Grove, VA, passed away on Friday, Jan. 27, 2023.

She was born in Indian Territory in the community of Winganon, OK on June 18, 1924 to Robert and Jewel Elizabeth (Galloway) House. Alene was raised and educated in Alluwe and graduated from Alluwe Public Schools. Following graduation Alene continued her education by attending business college in Bartlesville. On July 13, 1942 Alene married the love of her life, Johnny W. Kitchell, in Nowata, OK. Their union was gifted with five children: Johnna, Marilyn, Ann, Mary Beth and Tony. Alene helped provide for her family working in two government offices in Illinois and Oklahoma. She then went to work for the Wilmington School District where she retired.

A loving wife, mother and grandmother, Alene had a wide variety of interests and hobbies. She enjoyed traveling and especially when it involved a river cruise. Alene was an avid vegetable gardener and it was through those efforts that her family had fresh canned vegetables year-round. According to her son, Tony, even in her 80's if he did not get there to till the garden, Alene would get out there and get it done herself. Crafts were another interest that gave her countless hours of enjoyment.

Involved in several different clubs and organizations throughout her life; it was through the Eastern Stars, Daughters of the American Revolution, Cattlewomen's group, Red Hats Society, and the Pocahontas Club that Alene made many life-long friends. She was



also faithful in supporting the local Senior Citizens Center whether it be in Bartlesville or Chelsea. Once again always enjoying the company of others. No story about Alene would be complete unless you mentioned her life-long membership at Hillside Christian Church in Nowata. She was not only a very faithful member, but one that was ready to serve and help wherever she was needed.

Alene has left a legacy that will live on in the lives of her family and friends. She is survived by her children: Marilyn (Alan) Daily, Mary Beth (Jim) Williams and Tony (Cynthia) Kitchell; 10 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren; sister, Mary Jane DeLozier and numerous nieces and nephews.

Alene was preceded in death by her husband, Johnny W. Kitchell; two daughters, Johnna Mason and Ann Ranea Skeldon; parents, Elizabeth and Robert House; three brothers: Clifford, Carl and Johnny House; one sister, Betty (House) Lewis; grandsons, Jason Williams and Michael Daily and son-in-law, Fred Mason.

Services to remember and celebrate the life of V. Alene (House) Kitchell will be 10 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 18, 2023 at Hillside Christian Church in Nowata. Burial will follow in the Chelsea Cemetery, where Alene will be laid to rest beside her husband. Visitation will be Friday, at the funeral home, from 3-7 p.m., with family there to receive visitors from 5-7 p.m.

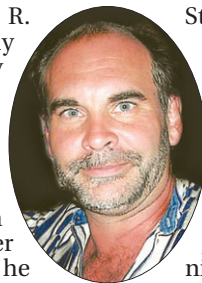
Please view and sign Alene's online tribute at www.delozierfuneralservice.com.

Michael R. Johnstone

WILMINGTON—Michael R. Johnstone, 59, of Wilmington, formerly of West Chicago, IL, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023 at Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital in Winfield, IL.

Born Oct. 3, 1963 in Evergreen Park, IL, Michael was raised in Winfield and graduated from West Chicago High School. He worked for Armbrust Paper Tubes, Inc. for over 25 years where he would become president of the company. Mike was proud to work for his family's business and loved working alongside his mother until she passed away in 2006. In his free time, he liked going for rides on his Kawasaki motorcycle, and he loved music, particularly talented guitarists such as Stevie Ray Vaughn and Eric Clapton to name a few. Mike had a great sense of humor and loved telling jokes, even if he had told you the same joke countless times. He was a gentle, kind, compassionate man, who was an outstanding father and who cherished his granddaughter.

Survivors include his wife of 34 years,



Stacey Johnstone; three children: Nicholas Johnstone (Katy Wheeler), of Channahon; Garrett (Kelly) Johnstone, of Camden, TN and Katherine Johnstone, of Bradley; one granddaughter, Kaya Johnstone; one sister and two brothers: Linda Johnstone, of Carol Stream; Mark (Kim) Johnstone, of Freeport, IL and Jim (Denice) Johnstone, of Portland, OR; and several nieces and nephews.

Mike was preceded in death by his parents, Dorothee and Gordon Johnstone.

Per Mike's wishes, cremation rites were accorded, and the family will receive friends for a celebration of life on Sunday, Feb. 19, 2023 at Hog Wild Express, 551 W. Kennedy Rd., in Braidwood from 12-4 p.m.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guest book, upload photographs, and share Mike's memorial page via social media.

Cremation rites and memorial arrangements are being made under the direction and care of Baskerville Funeral Home in Wilmington.

Eligible senior citizens can take advantage of tax deferral program

The Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) reminded senior citizens about the availability of the Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral Program which allows qualified seniors to defer all or part of their property taxes and special assessment payments on their principal residences.

Seniors needing assistance paying their property taxes have until March 1, 2023 to apply for the program.

The program, which works like a loan, allows qualified seniors to defer a maximum of \$7,500 per tax year (including both first and second installment payments), increased from \$5,000 last year. Deferred amounts are borrowed from the state, who pays the tax bill to the County Collector's Office. The program was also expanded this year to increase the household income threshold qualification from \$55,000 to \$65,000.

Interest on the amount paid by the state accumulates and a lien is placed on the

property for all deferred tax payments and interest, payable upon death of the homeowner, at the time the home is transferred to a new owner, or sooner, if the program participant chooses to pay off the deferred tax payments and interest.

"We encourage all eligible seniors who need help in paying their property taxes to look into this program and apply by the March 1 deadline," said Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) Director David Harris. "Not only has the income threshold been increased this year but the program has also been expanded to allow seniors to defer a greater amount of their property tax payments."

To qualify for the Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral, a property owner must:

- be 65 years of age or older prior to June 1 of the year that the application is being filed with the County Collector's Office,

• have a total annual household income of no more than \$65,000,

• have owned and occupied the property or other qualifying residence for at least the last three years,

• own the property, or share joint ownership with a spouse, or be the sole beneficiary, or the property owner and spouse be the sole beneficiaries of an Illinois land trust,

• have no unpaid property taxes and special assessments on the property, and

• have adequate insurance against fire or casualty loss.

To apply for the program, seniors need to contact their local County Collector's Office to receive an application. Once completed, the application must be filed with the Collector's Office on or before March 1 of each year they wish to defer their property taxes or special assessments.

For general questions visit IDOR's website at tax.illinois.gov or contact their local County Collector's Office.

Drop in gas price may be short-lived

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have fallen 7.9 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.51/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

"For a second straight week, the national average price of gasoline has declined, alongside the price of diesel which has fallen to its lowest level in nearly a year," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"While diesel prices likely have a long way to fall as inventories continue to improve, gasoline prices in some areas have gone up in the last weeks as the transition to summer gasoline is just around the corner. In addition, GasBuddy data shows that gasoline demand has risen for the third straight week, a trend that will likely continue as we gradually see temperatures warm and the heart of winter

moves to the rear view.

Prices in Illinois are 2.4 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 15.5 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

Area prices on Monday include \$3.17/g at the Mohsen station on Lorenza Road, Wilmington, \$3.31/g in Braidwood, \$3.41/g in Wilmington and \$3.68/g in Coal City.

The lowest price in the state was \$3.07/g while the highest was \$4.79/g, a difference of \$1.72/g.

"Refinery maintenance season will soon be in full force, likely putting upward pressure on prices. On average, gasoline prices rise between 35 and 85 cents per gallon between March and Memorial Day, so motorists seeing prices fall should enjoy the declines while they last."

Push for Illinois child tax credit begins

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD – A group of Democratic lawmakers on Feb. 7 called for creating a state-level child tax credit that would give low- and middle income families up to \$700 per child each year in tax relief.

But whether Gov. JB Pritzker includes such a plan in his budget proposal, scheduled to be delivered Feb. 15 – and whether it receives the endorsement of top Democratic leaders in the General Assembly – remains an open question.

Erion Malasi, director of policy and advocacy at the advocacy group Economic Security for Illinois, pegged the plan's cost at somewhere between \$700 million and \$800 million annually.

State Senator Mike Simmons, D-Chicago, said passage of such a measure would benefit about half of all children in Illinois.

"It puts money in the pockets of struggling moms and dads all across the state," he said during a Statehouse news conference. "And when we put money in the pockets of those working parents, we know that they can't afford to save so they're going to go out and spend that money on shoes for their kids, on health care that they've put off for too long, on food for their teenagers who love to eat."

Illinois already offers an earned income tax credit, or EITC, which is available to people who meet certain income guidelines, even if they have no children. A child tax credit would be an additional payment to parents. Like the EITC, the child tax credit would be refundable, meaning if the amount of the credit exceeds the filer's total tax liability, the excess amount would be repaid to the taxpayer.

The language of the proposal is contained

in Senate Bill 1444, which Simmons introduced Tuesday. Under the legislation, individuals with income below \$50,000 and married couples filing jointly with incomes below \$75,000 would be eligible for a \$700-per-child tax credit.

For tax filers with incomes above those limits, the amount of the credit would be reduced by \$24 for each \$1,000 of additional income.

Simmons was joined at the news conference by other supporters of the idea, including Senator Robert Peters, also a Chicago Democrat, whose district, he said, includes some of the wealthiest, and some of the poorest, ZIP codes in Illinois.

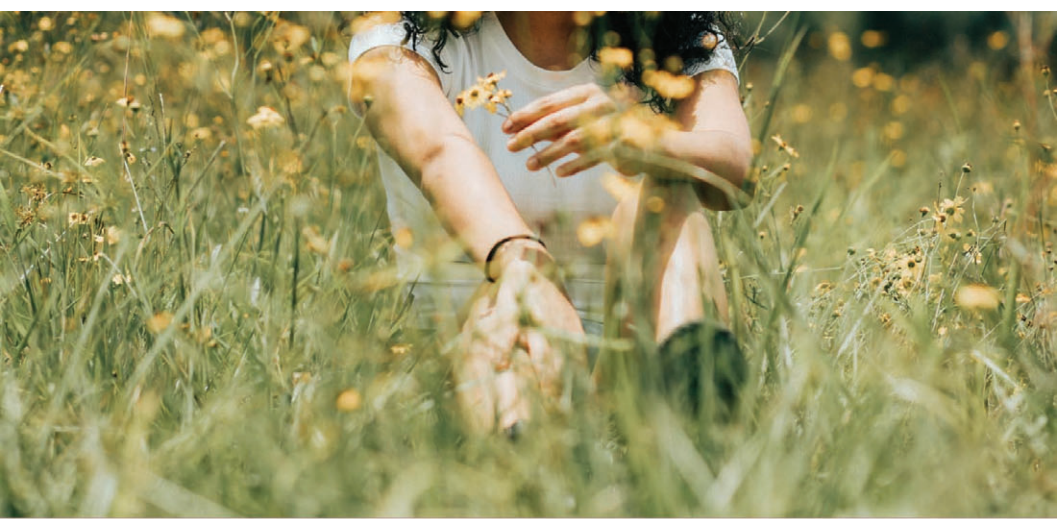
"No ZIP code should have that level of inequality," he said. "This is a step for us to move away from income inequality and to something that says equity and equality itself is a necessary part of life."

But the idea comes at a precarious time for Illinois, and it could face resistance due to its estimated annual price tag.

Although the state has been running multi-billion dollar surpluses in each of the last two years, the Governor's Office of Management and Budget has projected that state finances could start running deficits as soon as Fiscal Year 2025.

Meanwhile, Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza has cautioned lawmakers not to use the current surpluses to enact new, permanent programs that would obligate the state to fund long into the future.

"What I would be opposed to is seeing new funding items – unless you can really sell that this is an extreme necessity for the state at this time – we want to stay away from funding new programs that are going to have to be funded year to year," she told Capitol News Illinois during an interview in January.



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SNAP benefits will be reduced to pre-pandemic levels March 1

BY ZETA CROSS
THE CENTER SQUARE

Food pantries are bracing to feed more hungry people in Illinois.

In March, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program card holders in Illinois will see reductions of \$55 to \$250 per person, said Man-Yee Lee, spokesperson for the Greater Chicago Food Depository.

The Greater Chicago Food Depository is a food bank that supplies food to more than 700 local food pantries. Two million people in one million Illinois households currently receive SNAP benefits.

In April 2020, after the COVID-19 pandemic emergency was declared, the federal government added bonus dollars to SNAP cards, the taxpayer-funded cash cards that people of certain income levels use to buy groceries. In March, the federal government will return the subsidies to pre-pandemic amounts.

"Many people may not be following what Congress is doing and they may not know that these changes are happening," Lee told The Center Square. "At a time when food prices remain high, we are

really worried that this reduction in benefits will take people by surprise."

One in five households in the region struggles to put food on the table, Lee said.

"The hunger crisis preceded the pandemic," Lee said. "Inflation has only made it worse."

The exact size of the benefit decrease that each household will experience in March will vary greatly, depending on income and household size, Lee said. People with little to no net income will see the smallest reduction. The average one-person recipient will see a reduction of \$86 a month, Lee said.

The Greater Chicago Food Depository encourages people to check their accounts at the Application for Benefits Eligible website. Follow the links at chicagosfoodbank.org/snap for more information.

If circumstances in the household have changed, the household may qualify for increased benefits. Among the circumstances that could allow for more benefits are if more people are now living in the home, if the household income has gone down, hous-

ing, medical or child care expenses have gone up, or if a person in the household is paying child care expenses for a child who lives elsewhere.

This winter, inflation has sent more people to food pantries and meal programs, Lee said. For months now, the food depository has been buying more food to keep up with increased demand.

Generous donors in the private sector do supply some food, but much of the food is bought directly by the food depository, Lee said.

"People do not realize that the food depository continues to purchase much of the food that it distributes," she said.

In recent months, the depository has doubled what it spends on the food that it supplies to its food bank partners, Lee said.

"This is something that we have been addressing for quite a while now and we are very concerned," she said. "A recent consumer price index showed that prices are stabilizing - except food prices."

Come March, when SNAP payments are reduced, Lee expects even more people to turn to food pantries to put food on the table.

Mount Olivet Cemetery clean-up

Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Wilmington is planning a Spring clean-up March 3 (weather permitting). All decorations wanting to be kept must be removed at that time.

When decorating, please remember the following rules: Trees, shrubs, fence borders of any kind are not allowed and will be removed.

The purpose of the new section being all flush markers is to remove difficulties with maintenance and burials. All statues, figurines, etc., are not allowed in any section of the cemetery.

Anything not removed by the end of clean-up, will be removed and disposed of by the cemetery employees.

When clean-up has commenced, shepherds hooks only one per grave, can be placed.

Remember to remove them by Nov. 1. Plastic flowers must be in a ground vase and no flower pots. For a complete list of decorating rules and regulations, please contact the St. Rose Parish Office.

Annual FUMC Men's Club spaghetti dinner March 4

The Men's Club of the First United Methodist Church of Wilmington will be hosting its 37th annual spaghetti dinner on Saturday, March 4, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the church located at 401 E. Kahler Road, Wilmington.

Come for the spaghetti, stay for the desserts! Carry-outs available. Invite your neighbors—better yet, pick them up! Free will offering, no set price.

Proceeds from this event are used to support local missions such as Kuzma Care Cottage, Our Caring Closet, Lamb's Fold and the Christian Help Association.

Illinois CPA Society opens accounting scholarship application window

The Illinois CPA Society and CPA Endowment Fund of Illinois are excited to announce applications are now being accepted for more than 40 scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000 each that will be awarded for the 2023-2024 academic year.

These scholarships provide essential financial assistance to qualifying accounting students across the state of Illinois and reward them for their hard work and academic success. Applicants must be

junior, senior, or graduate-level accounting students enrolled at Illinois colleges or universities who demonstrate financial need, academic achievement, and leadership qualities.

There is just one application to submit for any or all scholarships for which the student is eligible. The application deadline for the following scholarships is April 1, 2023:

For more scholarship information visit www.icpas.org/scholarships.

Advocacy groups pushing for expansive paid family, medical leave in Illinois

BY HANNAH MEISEL
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD—A coalition of advocacy and labor groups is pushing for a state law to give Illinois workers 26 weeks of paid leave if they need to recover from an illness, domestic or sexual violence, or take care of a sick family member or new child.

The coalition's initial proposal—encapsulated in Senate Bill 1234 and House Bill 1530—would cover all employees in Illinois and all employees who earn at least \$1,600 annually. Paid leave would also apply to contract workers.

The benefits to workers would be paid out of a newly created special state fund. The law would require employers

to pay 0.73% of the wages for their employees and contractors into the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Fund, similar to the state's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. An additional fee of up to 0.05% could be imposed through administrative rules for administering the program.

Those who need paid leave would be required to provide documentation of pregnancy, adoption or guardianship of a new child, their own injury or illness, or that of a sick family member. The leave policy would also cover military-related time off and time needed to recover from sexual assault or domestic violence.

Those workers, if approved for leave, would

receive 90% of their average weekly wages for their leave period, up to a maximum of \$1,200 per week. Eventually that maximum would be adjusted to 90% of the average weekly wage in Illinois.

Those potential payouts are in line with the policies of the 11 other states with paid leave laws, although no other state's law is quite as permissive as the proposal being pushed in Illinois.

But business groups aren't engaging with the proposal yet. Rob Karr, president and CEO of the influential Illinois Retail Merchants Association, turned the focus back to last month's legislative agreement to created five days of paid leave after years of negotiation.

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

Drawing by Maddy Cutter

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\$10 for 12 tickets
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Tough decisions needed with fewer federal dollars

The legislature's Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability released its latest monthly fiscal report last week. The report claimed the state is still on track to match the commission's revised November estimate of a \$4.1 billion revenue increase for the current fiscal year.

Revenue had originally been projected to fall from the previous fiscal year. And much of the recently projected increase is believed to be a one-time event and has so far been treated as such.

But revenue projections have become so unreliably squirrely that groups which rely on state funding are starting to push to get their fair share of what they see as a fast-growing pie. Take a look at Medicaid, an always complicated and expensive topic that will become much more so in the coming months.

More than 300,000 Illinoisans risk losing Medicaid coverage at the end of March. There are those who believe that many of those folks are already back on employer healthcare coverage (or should be). States haven't been required to conduct redeterminations on Medicaid recipients during the pandemic, and that process will restart soon.



CAPITOL FACTS
Rich Miller

While the state could save money with fewer Medicaid recipients, states are also losing part of their federal Medicaid matching dollars that had been increased during the pandemic. The federal government has increased matching rates during past economic downturns, but it's never easy to adjust to a decrease, particularly when states have received so much extra for so long.

Hospitals were hit hard by the pandemic. They lost the ability to offer revenue-producing services during the closures, and the deadly viral waves that followed decimated their workforce, with illness, deaths and burnout.

When that federal Medicaid match falls, hospitals will undoubtedly feel an even greater pinch. Hospital closures are already a national problem, and it could get even worse as the financial pressure increases.

In the past, hospitals were pushed to increase their self-assessments, which injected more money into the Medicaid system and produced more matching federal funds. But hospitals say the state is cash-flush enough to provide more money on its own. And, like I noted above, there's very little trust in budget projections. If the projection is flat or less, it'll

be met with widespread skepticism. And many are now eyeing the state's new \$1 billion rainy day fund.

But the problems don't end there. The state has allowed out of state and retired nurses to practice here during the pandemic, and those emergency rules will disappear in May, when the governor's pandemic executive orders expire.

The Illinois Hospital Association estimates 15,000 of those nurses are working here right now, many of whom are well-paid traveling nurses. While the travel nurses are straining hospital budgets, the workforce situation is such that the sudden loss of that many nurses could shock the entire system and create huge additional costs. The hospitals have been trying for years to enroll the state in an interstate nursing compact to allow non-Illinois nurses to practice here, but that has always been thwarted by unions.

The governor has already said he wants to greatly expand preschool and childcare programs and make college tuition "free for every working-class family." All of that will cost money, and hospitals are just one group which will be pounding at the door.

Hospitals are the largest employers in most Downstate and even some suburban legislative districts. And even if they aren't the largest employers, their boards are usually populated

with the most influential business leaders in the region. It's very hard to ignore them.

Meanwhile, after forcefully opposing a graduated income tax in 2020, the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago is now proposing a 10-year, personal and corporate state income tax "surcharge" of 0.5 percent and 0.7 percent, respectively, regardless of income.

None of the \$2.9 billion raised by the tax hike could be spent on social services or other budget priorities. Instead, all the money would be sent to the pension funds and the rainy day fund.

The group also says the state should implement mostly unspecified "cost disciplines" to help pay for the plan. It suggests an example of slicing agency spending by 2-3 percent as a start. It also suggests eliminating the estate tax on assets above \$4 million, the current state trigger. They should've left that one out because it's a bad look, to say the least.

Widening the revenue base while narrowing the spending base makes fiscal sense on paper. But the report ignores the decades of all too real state underfunding of services for people with dire needs.

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

Workforce shortage remains key concern for transportation sector

BY DANIEL GRANT
FARMWEEK

The shortage of truck drivers has eased slightly across the nation compared to 2021.

But the workforce shortage remains a top concern of the transportation sector for 2023, according to a panel of industry experts on at the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association (IFCA) annual convention in Peoria.

"From the things we see in 2023, the focus has to be on the workforce. It's the No. 1 thing we're hearing in the sector," said Kirby Wagner, GROWMARK associate manager of government relations.

"We have a tight supply chain on top of that," he noted. "It will continue."

The American Trucking Associations (ATA) estimates the U.S. was short about 78,000 truck drivers last year, down from a high of 80,000 in 2021.

"We saw a lot of retirements in the trucking industry and a lot of overworked driv-

ers," Wagner said. Some drivers returned to the industry and freight demand declined slightly in recent months, which eased some of the strain.

ATA's truck tonnage index decreased 2.5% in November after slipping 1.2% in October. The decrease reflects a slowing goods economy with housing-related freight particularly weak, ATA reported.

Looking ahead, Wagner said GROWMARK continues to work with new truck drivers to get them through an expanded training and regulatory environment. Meanwhile, IFCA is pursuing an extension of restricted Class B licenses to allow the transport of up to 3,000 pounds of all farm products, and not just liquid fertilizer, to help expand the pool of drivers in the ag industry, according to KJ Johnson, IFCA president.

"There'll be more collaboration across all sectors to make sure farmers get all the products they need on time," Wagner said.

Elsewhere, workforce

constraints played a big role in efficiency concerns for the railroad industry in the past year, according to Peter Skosey, executive director, state government affairs for BNSF Railway.

"Our workforce is strained," said Skosey, who hopes to see new hires after the industry narrowly avoided a labor strike. "We just finished a difficult round of labor negotiations. The December agreement gives workers a 24% pay increase."

Issues about paid sick leave for workers was a key sticking point in the railroad negotiations, but often misunderstood outside the industry, according to the BNSF representative.

"We don't have paid sick leave, but we have time off. The average employee gets 27 to 33 days off a year," Skosey said. "And, we do have long-term sick leave."

With a new labor agreement in place, Skosey looks for rail service disruptions to ease this year. The company offers sign-on bonuses as high as

\$25,000 for conductors and engineers.

"I think we'll still see some ripple effects (from recent service disruptions), but our network is back to fluidity," he said.

BNSF also spends more than \$3 billion annually to maintain its network.

"We are concerned about efficiency, but we also have the luxury of investing in infrastructure," Skosey added. "We've been able to decrease rail service disruptions by 30% the last 10 years."

"Further opportunities for technological upgrades in the railroad industry and operational improvements will also reduce service disruptions."

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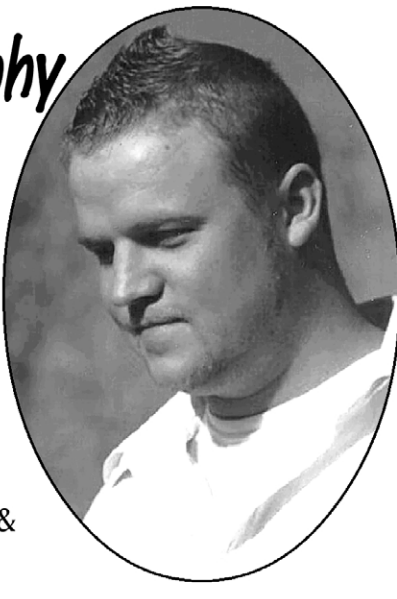
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Thank you

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Sincerely, The Smith Family
Elaine, Greg, Janet & family,
Mike, Faith and girls,
Chris and Lanie

How tire waste is bad for the environment

EARTH TALK

Questions & Answers About Our Environment

Dear EarthTalk: What happens to all the rubber waste that wears off tires as cars and trucks roll down the road? Is it bad for the environment?

-- Jack C., Marion, OH
Most people have heard of exhaust emissions, but there is another form of emissions released by vehicles known as non-exhaust emissions (NEEs).

According to independent testing and data firm Emissions Analytics, they can be as much as 1,000 times worse for the environment. NEEs are defined as "particles released into the air from brake wear, tyre wear, road surface wear and resuspension of road dust during on-road vehicle usage."

Unfortunately, NEEs account for most of the primary particulate matter released by road vehicles on a daily basis.

In total, more than 1.5 million metric tons of tire-wear particles are lost to the environment each year, equivalent to 30 percent of the weight of every tire used in the U.S. NEEs constitute as much as 60 percent of the particles that are less than 2.5 micrometers in size (PM2.5) and 73 percent of those that are less than 10 micrometers in size (PM10), making them one of the greatest vehicular threats to nature.

This is only further exacerbated by the growing electric-vehicle industry, as EV's weigh significantly more due to their batteries and also have



TIRE PARTICLES & other non-exhaust emissions constitute the majority of fine particulate emissions as a result of auto travel on U.S. roads.

a higher torque output. Putting these two characteristics together, tires used on an EV will inevitably wear out faster.

According to Scott Clark, Michelin executive vice president for automotive, motorsport experiences and Americas Regions, the difference in tire life-span can be as much as 20 percent less for an EV compared to an internal combustion engine vehicle.

As for the effects that NEEs have on the environment, the data is unsettling to say the least.

In a study on estuary ecosystems led by post-doctoral scholar Samreen Siddiqui, it was found that Inland Silverside and mysid shrimp, when exposed to tire particulates and a resultant pollutant known as leachate (a mix of chemicals that are released by tire particulates)

had a number of problems, including significantly altered swimming behaviors and reduced growth.

In a similar study led by graduate student Brittany Cunningham, a freshwater ecosystem was exposed to tire particulates and leachates.

The organisms in question—embryonic zebrafish and the crustacean *Daphnia magna*—experienced mortality and developmental abnormalities as a result of the exposure.

Leachate was considered the main driver of toxicity in both organisms, with the particles themselves enhancing the toxicity in comparison to the leachate alone.

The researchers recommended some innovative solutions to preventing tire-wear exposure, including rain gardens on the sides of roads to

capture tire particulates, as well as more durable tires, incentivizing greener transit alternatives, and something known as particle capture devices.

The Tyre Collective, a research group that produces sustainable devices for tire-particulate removal, invented a device that is capable of capturing the particulates themselves.

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Survey pushes for greater focus on teacher recruitment and retention amid shortages

BY NIKA SCHOONOVER
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois schools are still grappling with a teacher shortage that seems to be getting worse, a recent survey by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools shows.

This mirrors the state's own data, which shows Illinois' teacher shortage is at the highest level in the last five years. More than 5,300 classroom positions, including administrative and support personnel, went unfilled in 2022, according to the Illinois State Board of Education.

As a result, teachers often have to absorb unsupervised students into their existing classes or fill in for subject areas in which they have no background.

"No matter how much we're trying, we're not filling all the positions and the ones we are filling are people who aren't necessarily qualified to teach what their assignment is," IARSS President Mark Klaisner said in a recent interview.

The IARSS, a trade group for the public officials who serve as an intermediary between local school districts and the Illinois State Board of Education, has surveyed nearly 700 school districts on the state of the teacher shortage crisis for the past six years. But this year's survey focused more intently on short- and long-term solutions proposed by school districts statewide.

According to their 2022 survey, 68% of districts reported

fewer teacher applicants than the year before. And 45% of districts reported the shortage in their school had worsened from the year prior.

Klaisner said everyone involved in education needs to be heard when considering policy changes, as problems with teacher recruitment and retention have different causal mixes in different parts of the state.

"There are lots of people working on how to come to solutions," he said. "Some of it is related to money but a lot is related to reestablishing the teaching profession and, whatever that takes, we need to work with higher ed, we need to work with early childhood and everywhere in between."

One area of focus, Klaisner said, is improving the pipeline between education institutions and Illinois' K-12 schools by starting educator recruitment earlier. That could include programs that allow middle schoolers to shadow teachers.

Other policy recommendations in the IARSS report include making college more affordable for prospective educators and increasing the pool of substitute teachers.

Improving the pipeline
The report emphasized the importance of making the teaching profession more desirable for prospective educators, outlining policy recommendations that would lessen financial burdens and encourage greater diversity.

Along with job shadowing programs, he advocated for dual credit programs that

allow students to earn some college credit while in high school.

"We need to look for expedited routes that are going to be less expensive," Klaisner said.

The report also calls for direct state funding to key areas to encourage more diversity within the profession. This includes increasing funding from \$4.2 million to \$7 million annually for the Minority Teachers of Illinois scholarship; investing more money into the Illinois Teachers Loan Repayment Program which helps pay down student loan debt for Illinois college students that qualify to teach in low-income areas; and further increasing the state's Monetary Award Program by \$50 million.

Those MAP grants go to eligible college students and do not need to be repaid. While the program's funding has grown to \$601 million from about \$400 million in the past four years, the report suggested increasing it by \$50 million will ensure more teachers from minority communities will receive the grants.

To better fill gaps in the short term, Klaisner pointed to incentivizing teachers to complete additional subject endorsements, which can be done through the ISBE website.

"If you've got a good teacher who's willing to try something new, give them the appropriate endorsement, but then give them three years to be able to complete the coursework to be fully certified in that area," Klaisner said.

By giving teachers the time and space to complete supplemental endorsements, Klaisner said it will better equip them to fill in potential staffing gaps.

Other recommendations include observing how districts have used federal pandemic-era Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, or ESSER, funds to help teachers get provisional licenses in shortage subject areas. Additionally, the survey recommends strengthening

the state's educator prep programs by showing which paths have stronger results in teacher placement and success.

Several survey respondents also noted that a 2010 state law creating a lower tier of pension benefits for new employees has made the teaching profession less desirable from a compensation standpoint.

Increasing substitute teacher accessibility

When it comes to filling short-term gaps, the report focused on increasing the pool of substitute teachers.

"When you don't have enough classroom teachers, and then you don't have enough subs, then you've got classrooms that are literally empty. I mean, the children are in the room but there's no teacher," said Representative Sue Scherer, D-Decatur, who was also a teacher for 34 years in Decatur and Maroa-Forsyth.

Last April, Gov. JB Pritzker signed a package of four bills to address the shortage, including House Bill 4798, which allows currently enrolled teaching students with at least 90 credit hours to be licensed as substitute teachers.

According to the survey, 60% of respondents said HB 4798 has helped recruit and retain teachers.

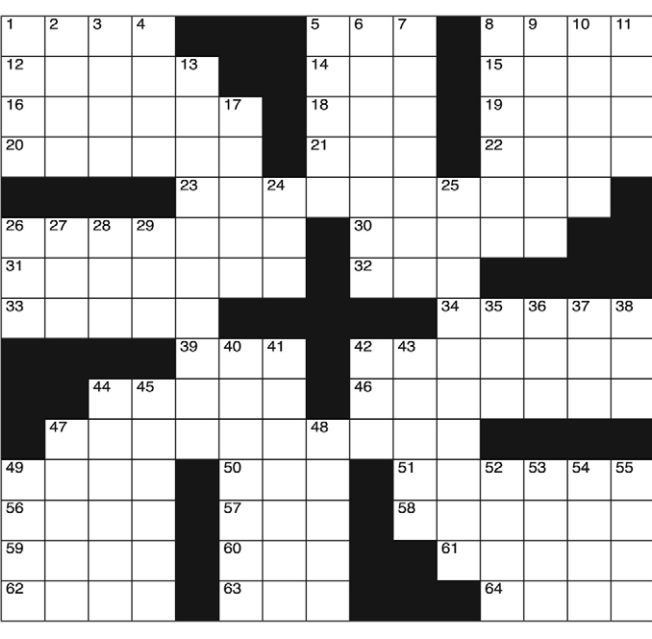
In addition, 80% of districts support a plan which would increase the number of days retired teachers can substitute from 120 days to 140 days without impacting their retirement benefits.

The number was increased to 120 from 90 in a bill signed in April, Senate Bill 3893, but it was scheduled to expire in 2023. The idea was supported by 79 percent of IARSS survey respondents, and the report advocated for making the extension permanent.

The laws allowing college students to serve as substitute teachers is also scheduled to expire, and the report suggested making it permanent as well.

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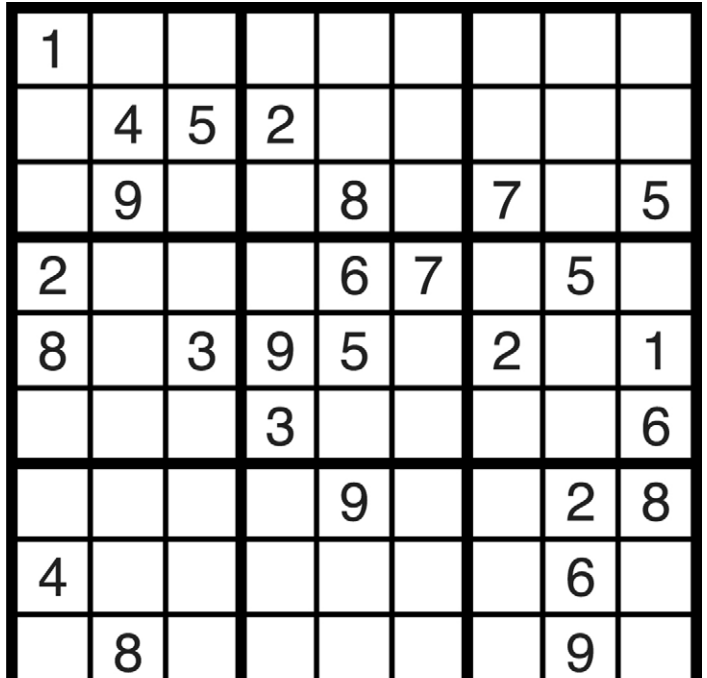


CLUES ACROSS

- 1. River in Tuscany
- 5. A way to represent
- 8. Rocker's guitar
- 12. Civil Rights group
- 14. Brew
- 15. Scratch
- 16. W. Asian country
- 18. The Eye Network
- 19. Clarified butter
- 20. Part of the Cascade Range
- 21. Downwind
- 22. A way to steer
- 23. Loop
- 26. Not ingested
- 30. Swampy coniferous forest
- 31. Musician
- 32. Signing
- 33. Containing iron
- 34. Part of a theorem or proof
- 39. Veterans battleground (slang)
- 42. Of enormous proportions
- 44. Italian city
- 46. Come before
- 47. Balm
- 49. Undergarments
- 50. Male parent
- 51. Ropes
- 56. Ear part
- 57. Investment vehicle
- 58. Dictator
- 59. Cain and ___
- 60. A type of code
- 61. Border river along India and Nepal
- 62. It's what's for dinner
- 63. Consume
- 64. Christian __, designer

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Cuckoos
- 2. Skin issue
- 3. City in central Japan
- 4. Sorrels
- 5. Twinned diamond
- 6. Canadian province
- 7. Monetary units
- 8. Head honcho
- 9. Goddess of wisdom
- 10. Part of a play
- 11. Get rid of
- 13. Applicant
- 17. Bowling alleys have many
- 24. Explosive
- 25. "The Say Hey Kid"
- 26. Ultrahigh frequency
- 27. No (Scottish)
- 28. Make a mistake
- 29. Credit card term
- 35. Keyboard key
- 36. Woman (French)
- 37. In the middle of
- 38. Score perfectly
- 40. Coat a metal with an oxide coat
- 41. Deadly disease
- 42. A place to dock a boat (abbr.)
- 43. Belch
- 44. Member of U.S. Navy
- 45. "In ___": separate from others
- 47. Examine extensively
- 48. Adjust
- 49. Tattle
- 52. Actor Pitt
- 53. Gulls
- 54. Within
- 55. Exceptionally talented performer



Iowa State fall dean's list

More than 10,200 Iowa State University students have been recognized for outstanding academic achievement by being named to the fall semester 2022 Dean's List. Students named to the Dean's List must have earned a grade point

average of at least 3.50 on a 4.00 scale while carrying a minimum of 12 credit hours of graded course work.

Among those students were Emma Hennessy of Gardner and Ashlee Kelly of Wilmington.

COMET SPORTS

Comets have a shot at winning conference outright

The Reed-Custer boys basketball clinched at least a tie for the ICE conference title on Friday by defeating Coal City, 60-47.

The Comets were to play last night (Tuesday) at Streator for a chance at the out right title. (Results were unknown as of press time.)

Hopefully they played as good as they did on Friday when they used a high-pace offense to rally in the second half for the win.

The Comets were up 12-3 in the first quarter before Coal City warmed up and closed the gap to 29-25 at the break. Reed-Custer made their free throws count in the closing minutes, shooting 10-for-17 for the game, to win it.

Lucas Foote led the RCHS with 20 points (three three-

pointers), four rebounds and three steals. Jake McPhearson followed with 15 points, six rebounds and five assists. Josh Bohac contributed 12 points, six rebounds and two assist.

Wes Shats led the team defensively with 12 rebounds, two assists and six points. Jace Christian was a great help with six assists, six rebounds and four points. Colin Monroe had three points and one rebound.

Last Tuesday, Beecher handed Reed-Custer its fifth loss of the season in a high scoring game of 71-64.

Wes Shats had a big game offensively and defensively with 17 points and 12 rebounds. He also contributed two assists and two steals. Jake McPhearson followed with 16 points and seven rebounds. He also helped out with four

assists. Lucas Foote chipped in 12 points, three rebounds and three assists.

Jace Christian had nine points, five rebounds and two assists. Josh Bohac had 7 points, one assist and one steal. Jake Reardon contributed three points and six rebounds.

Comets were 23-5 and 11-2 prior to the Streator game. They enter the Seneca regional as the #5 seed, hosting Coal City (9) on Saturday at 1 p.m. The winner of that contest advances to the regional semifinal on Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. against the winner of the Wilmington (11) vs. Bishop McNamara (3) game. The regional championship will be played in Seneca at 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 24.



SHOOTING THE BALL in traffic is Reed-Custer's Josh Bohac playing against Coal City on Senior night. Photo by Zadie Sims



SENIOR LUCAS FOOTE passes the ball to a teammate during Friday night's victory at home. Photo by Zadie Sims

Lady Panthers upend Joliet Hufford

The Reed-Custer 8th grade volleyball team won against Joliet Hufford, 25-13 and 25-20.

Mackenzie Foote had three kills and six aces. Alyssa Wollenzien had three kills, three aces, and one block. Kayla Schott had three aces and two kills. Gracie Robinson had two kills and one ace.

Reese Brown had four aces and two kills.

Kirstin Klein had two aces and two kills.

The 7th grade Lady Panthers also won their game against Joliet Hufford on Monday. Peyton Landgraf had 5 aces and 1 dig. Kamryn Wilkey had 1 kill, and 3 aces, Adalyn Steichen had 1 ace. Madalynn Marshner had 6 aces. Sophie Moyers had 2 aces. Lastly, Kadence VanDuyne had 2 aces.

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. 21-Cook the Book, 6-7 p.m. Join us for our cook-book-meets-potluck. Each member chooses a recipe from the same cookbook and brings a dish to share at the following meeting.

Feb. 24-I-Cash Program, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. The State Treasurer is holding \$2.5 billion in unclaimed funds for Illinoisans. Come to the library, talk to a treasury representative and find out if you have unclaimed money. Walk-in's welcome.

Feb. 24-LIHEAP, 1-3 p.m. This program is designed to assist households with low incomes to help, through financial aid, meet their energy needs.

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. 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.

Feb. 18-STEM Saturday-Bath Bombs, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Your child will learn a mix of chemistry and home ec to create their own bath bombs

and explore how changing the amounts of different ingredients affects how the bath bombs end up being when you toss them in the bath.

Feb. 20-TWEEN Stranger Things Craft, limited spots, 5:30-6:30 p.m. Celebrate all Things Strange in this hour-long craft and snack program. Intended for tweens, grades 6-8, participants will be able to create their own Stranger Things ornament as well as make their own waffles.

Feb. 21-Play-Doh Playdates, 10:30-11 a.m. It's time for some Play-Doh fun. We have the Play-Doh and tools; all you need to bring is your imagination.

Homeschool Programs Feb. 23-Painting a Pug on National Dog Biscuit Day, \$9 per person, 10:30-11:30 a.m. It's National Dog Biscuit Day! A perfect day for your homeschooler, or you too mom, to paint a canvas painting of a Pug in a Top Hat in celebration. Refreshments and a take-home treat for your dog included.

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



THE LADY COMETS concluded their season Saturday with a 33-28 loss to Beecher. Dribbling the ball for Reed-Custer is Samantha Sprimont. Photo by Zadie Sims

Lady Comets fall in regional play

The Reed-Custer girls basketball team played their final game of the season Saturday, losing 33-28 to Beecher in the regional quarterfinal game.

The Lady Comets led at half, 17-10, but lost steam in the third quarter that ultimately changed the dynamic of the entire game.

Leading scorer for the Comets was Brooklyn Harding with 12 points, 1 rebound, 3 assists, and 2 steals. Natalie

Flores added 7 points, 2 rebounds and 1 steal. Laci Newbrough chipped in 4 points and a team high 7 rebounds and 1 steal. Caelan Cole had 3 points, 5 rebounds, 1 assist, 3 steals, and 1 block. Gwen Stewart had 2 points, 4 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 steal, and 1 block. Leah Grace added 2 rebounds.

Final record for the Lady Comets is 15-16 and 9-5 in the ICE conference (4th place).

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COMET SPORTS

Six Comet wrestlers headed to state

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

Reed-Custer has qualified one female and five male wrestlers for the state final individual tournament which start Thursday in Champaign.

"The comets wrestled with a lot of heart Saturday to get six state qualifiers," praised coach Yale Davis. "The team wrestled great and the results reflected that. Our goal now is to bring home some hardware."

The Comets had one champion, two seconds, one third placer and a fourth placer on Saturday during the Coal City Sectional.

At 170 pounds, Rex Pfeifer (43-5) claimed first place by defeating Coal City's Derek Carlson (34-6) in a 5-0 shutout. Pfeifer, a junior, scored his points early against the Coaler senior and kept Carlson at bay in the final period.

Pfeifer finished the tourney 4-0 by pinning his first three opponents with times of 1:31, :44 and 1:47. He enters state in the lower half of the bracket where he begins against a sophomore from Mercer, Brodie Salmon, who has a 27-7 record. Two wins would put him up against Joseph Norton, a senior from Canton with the best record in 170 at 47-1, in the quarterfinals.

Comet big men Kody Marschner (220) and Gunnar Berg (285) made it to the championship round on Saturday before settling for second place.

Marschner (36-2) was battling hard against 27-0 Gabriel Kaminski (Nazareth Academy) when Kaminski pulled off the unthinkable and pegged the Comet senior in 3:00. Up until that match Marschner had barely worked up a sweat after pinning his first two opponents with falls of 0:17 and 1:03.

Marschner, who finished third at state a year ago, takes on junior Jacob Bischoff of Leroy with a 40-8 record. A first round win may lead to a battled against James Herring of Roxanna who is 35-5. After that it's possible Marschner could bump into Drake Dearth of Coal City who is 37-



Photo by Eric Fisher

REED-CUSTER SENIOR Kody Marschner goes after Gabriel Kaminski from Nazareth Academy during the sectional championship match at 220 pounds. Marschner, with only two losses, was caught in the second round by Kaminski with a pin. Marschner returns to the state finals on Thursday.

8. Thankfully, Nazareth's Kaminski is in the bottom bracket and wouldn't pop up until the final round.

Berg (38-5) stayed within striking distance of Isaiah Gonzalez (IC Catholic, 13-1) throughout the sectional championship match before falling 3-0. His quarterfinal was by :26 fall and

semi-final by 2:20 fall.

Berg, a senior, will square off in the state prelims against junior Mike McLaughlin (29-16) from Peoria ND. A win and he'll face either a 44-2 or 43-7 opponent. It's possible Berg could enter the quarterfinal against Michael Gonzalez (27-7) of Coal City.

At 138, Comet sophomore Jeremy Eggleston (38-9) got a big 5-2 victory over Alex Johnson (DePaul College Prep, 27-9) to claim third place. Eggleston opened with a 3:50 fall and 11-3 major decision victory before getting pinned by Bryson Spaulding (IC Catholic, 10-4) in 3:08. He recovered with a 1:39 pin in the semi-final wrestlebacks before facing Johnson.

Eggleston begins state against William Taylor (41-4) from Kewanee. He'll then have a tough round against either a 49-1 or 42-7 opponents. If all the stars line up right it's possible Eggleston would face Coal City's Buddy Widlowski for the championship.

Placing fourth at 132 was Comet junior Sam Begler (10-3). He bowed out of the third place match due to injury default. His day started with a 0:54 victory. He then got pinned 2:48 against Vin Moreno (Chicago (Phoenix Military Academy, 40-3)

Begler then got a fall 1:08, 5-1 decision and 4:59 fall to qualify for state. He'll face Holden Brazelton (St. Joe Odgen, 45-2) in the state prelims.

Also wrestling for the Comets at sectional but not placing were 120—Maxymilian Lichaj (16-16), 160—Landon Markle (13-3) who went 1-2 for the day and 182—Dominic Alaimo (29-19) who went 2-2.

IHSA Girls Sectional @ Geneseo

Lady Comet Judith Gamboa (23-15) placed third during the Geneseo Sectional to advance to state Feb. 24-25 in Bloomington.

Gamboa, at 105 pounds, had a bye for starters. She got a :33 fall in round two and 1:57 fall in the quarterfinal.

She lost her semifinal match to Zoe Dempsey (Lincoln-Way West, 9-0) after getting pinned in 5:21. Gamboa recovered nicely in the wrestlebacks with falls of 2:15 and 2:57.

Lady Comets who participated but did not place were 100—Jayden Brodinski (4-11), and 115—Madysen Meyer (5-10).



Photo by Eric Fisher

REED-CUSTER'S Gunnar Berg (38-5) tries for the takedown against Isaiah Gonzalez (IC Catholic, 13-1) during the sectional championship match at 285 pounds on Saturday. Berg settled for second place to advance to the state finals tournament in Champaign starting Thursday.



Photo by Eric Fisher

SECTIONAL CHAMPION - Reed-Custer's Rex Pfeifer makes his move on Coal City's Derek Carlson during the first place match at 170 pounds on Saturday during the sectional tournament in Coal City. Pfeifer beat Carlson 5-0 to win the title and advance to state.



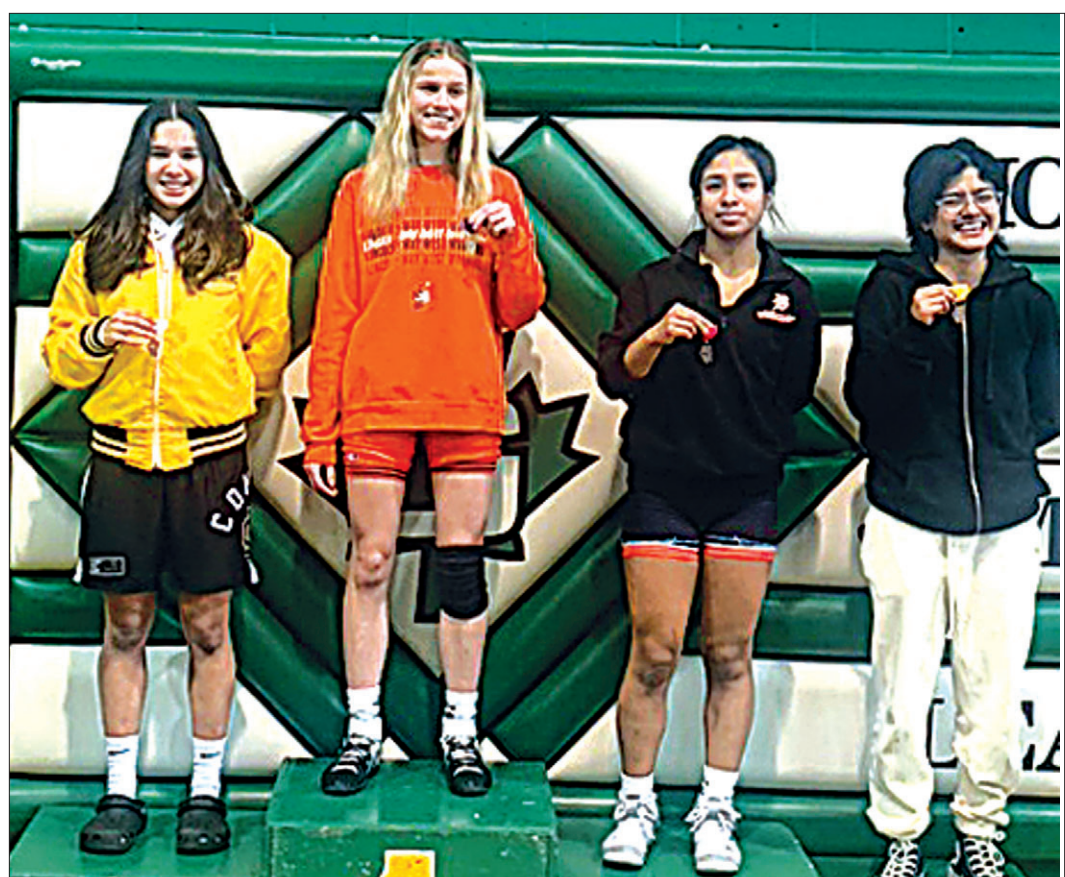
Photo by Eric Fisher

COMET SOPHOMORE Jeremy Eggleston (38-9) got a big 5-2 victory over Alex Johnson (DePaul College Prep, 27-9) to claim third place during the sectional held in Coal City on Saturday.



Photo by Eric Fisher

SIDELINE SUPPORT - Reed-Custer wrestler Jeremy Eggleston and assistant coach Trent Lyons cheer on 170-pounder Rex Pfeifer for shutting out Derek Carlson to claim the sectional championship on Saturday in Coal City.



RCHS WRESTLER Judith Gamboa (left) competed at sectionals in Geneseo at 105 pounds and brought home third place. She advance to state in Bloomington on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 24-25.