



Gruber goes to state for speech

Comets earn a spot on the podium



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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2023

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## Honorary street designations cause fiery debate in Braidwood

BY MARNEY SIMON  
EDITOR

A group of local residents let their frustrations be known on a plan to create a process for granting honorary street designations in Braidwood, after the first draft of an ordinance to create that process cast doubt on the future of the handful of signs already in place.

The city of Braidwood currently has four honorary street designations: George J. Boyd Memorial Drive on Center Street, Chester A. Grygiel Memorial Drive on School Street, Red and Rae Bohac Memorial Drive along Eureka Street, and Wayne T. Saltzman Parkway on First Street.

In order to be granted the honor, recipients of honorary street designations must have displayed a passion and devotion for the Braidwood community, and must have made a significant impact or contribution which in some way, shape or form affected the lives of

those who call Braidwood home. Previous honorary street designations were approved by proclamation of the city council. However, there was no formal policy or procedure in place, such as the process that exist in other towns. In Wilmington, for example, an honorary street designation starts with an application that is reviewed then approved by the members of the city council. Wilmington also limits the number of honorary roadways designated to three per year.

The issue came to the council earlier this year, when they received two requests for designations. With no process in place, city officials asked the city attorney to craft an ordinance to map out the process.

On Feb. 14, residents approached the members of the City Council with concerns over the proposal, which had been placed on the agenda for approval. Those friends and

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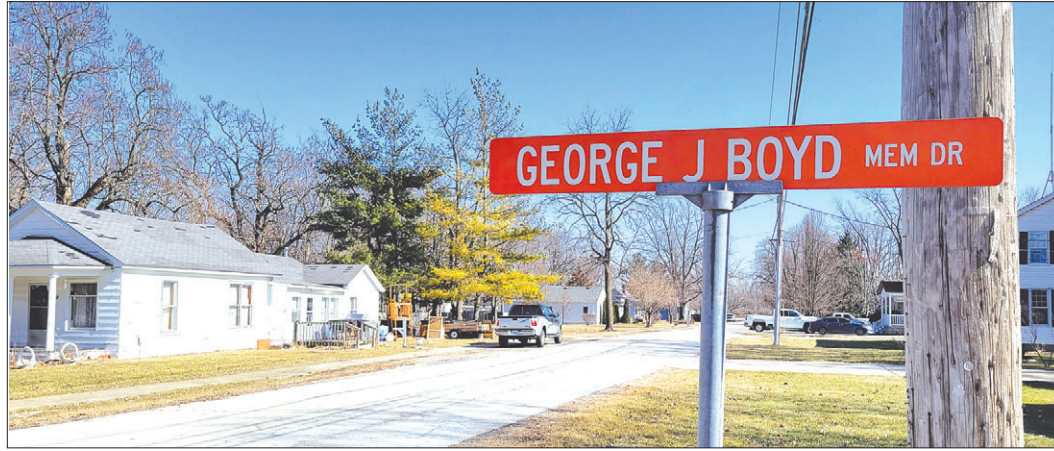


Photo by Marney Simon

GEORGE J. BOYD MEMORIAL Drive is one of four honorary streets in the city of Braidwood. A plan to create a policy for creating honorary street names in Braidwood has been tabled, after public outcry that the policy could potentially mean they city's four current roadways could lose their status.

## A Comet coach's final call



Photo by Eric Fisher

REED-CUSTER boys basketball coach Mark Porter (seated, center) talks with his players during Saturday's playoff game against Coal City in the high school gym. It was the last time coach Porter would call the plays during a home contest as he is retiring at the end of this season after 18 years and over 320 wins at Reed-Custer. The Comets travel to Seneca 7:30 p.m. tonight to play Bishop McNamara in the semi-final round of the regionals. If they win they advance to the regional championship in Seneca at 7 p.m. Friday. For more on the outcome of Saturday's victory read today's sports.

## Reed-Custer strategic plan moves to next phase of planning

BY MARNEY SIMON  
EDITOR

The Reed-Custer School District is moving forward with plans to update its strategic plan.

The committee on crafting the plan met earlier this month during a special session to help come up with the language to craft the plan.

"Collectively, that was a success," Superintendent Mark Mitchell told members of the board and education during their regular monthly meeting on Feb. 15. "Everybody in attendance

between all of you as board members, our admin, our teachers, our parents, our kids, I especially was really proud of our kids for the voice that they lent that day. I enjoyed having them in our groups. We did come up with five new strategic areas for priorities."

Those five areas are communications, student supports, recognition, consistent expectations, and educational pathways.

"We met as an admin team the Tuesday following that and we went through as the editing committee,"

Mitchell said. "We took the language that was provided and adjusted it, cleaned it up."

Mitchell said the result is a first draft of the strategic plan, which will now undergo further discussions and revisions before coming to the board for approval in June.

The strategic plan is revised every few years. The plan serves as a roadmap for the district to reach the needs of all students, by establishing priorities that support and elevate learning conditions for both students and staff.

The Illinois State Board of Education also creates a

strategic plan for all public schools in the state.

The state's plan was designed in partnership with all education stakeholders from around the state and deeply informed by their input and feedback.

The state's plan is built around three overarching goals, all underpinned by equity: Student learning, learning conditions, and elevating educators.

In other business before the board on Feb. 15:

SEE BOARD, PAGE 2



Photo by Marney Simon

JUST IN TIME for the warmer weather to arrive, the playground equipment at Goodrich Park in Braidwood has finally reopened. The equipment was vandalized in September 2021, and after a 17 month wait period, replacement parts were finally installed this month.

## Goodrich Park back in play

STAFF REPORT

It took 17 months. But, just in time for the warmer weather to finally arrive, families are finally able to spend time again watching their children enjoy the equipment at

Braidwood's Goodrich Park.

"After numerous months of manufacturing delays, the play structure equipment at Goodrich Park which had been vandalized in September of

SEE PARK, PAGE 2

## Comprehensive plan effort moves to next step

BY MARNEY SIMON  
EDITOR

Creating a road map for a successful Braidwood. That was the topic of discussion during a special informational meeting at City Hall on Feb. 16, focusing on the city's plan to finally create a new comprehensive plan.

A comprehensive plan is a long term plan designed to help guide development and growth, while maintaining what the community deems to be "good qualities" of the city.

Such plans serve as a framework for city and community leaders, residents,

local business owners, and potential investors on the vision of the community.

A comprehensive plan can help the residents and business owners in the city make informed decisions on land use, transportation issues, infrastructure, and capital improvements.

In 2022, the city of Braidwood was awarded assistance from the Chicago

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# Signs

neighbors said the creation of a process was all fine and good, but took issue with one item in the proposed ordinance: That such an honorary sign would remain in place for 10 years, and would then be removed and donated to the family of the honoree. Wilmington's honorary street sign program provides that the signs remain up in perpetuity, a plan that residents would want to see in Braidwood a well.

Luann Bolatto was one of several residents who made an impassioned plea to the council to hold off on such a plan, which in writing had the potential to remove the sign placed in honor of her father, George Boyd.

"I feel [the signs] should remain in place due to the fact that they represent a very important part in Braidwood's history," Bolatto said. "An example is my own father's sign, the George Boyd Memorial Drive right here on the corner of Main and Center. Members of our community went through the proper channels to have his name put up there as a remembrance to his deep commitment to our city."

Bolatto noted that the majority of the City Council knew her father, who was born and raised in Braidwood.

"He just wanted to make Braidwood a better and safer place for us all to live and grow up in," she said about her father, who served as fire chief for 30 years until his death in 1977. Boyd was also a former mayor, council member, city clerk, and police magistrate. He also owned and operated Boyd's Variety Store on Main Street.

"The reason I'm telling you all of this is to inform you that these signs have all been put up and have a reason for being there, and should not be taken down just because you do not know who they are. Along with my father the people of this town have chosen to honor Red and Rae Bohac, Chester Grygiel, and Wayne Saltzman and their deep commitment to our community, and I feel their names need to be honored for years to come as well."

Bolatto suggested that the city create a committee to consider applications for such honorary signs.

City leaders said that while the passage to remove signs after 10 years was included in the first draft of the ordinance, that draft had not been approved by the

council. City leaders said they had no intention of removing current signs, and the passage was removed from the ordinance that was before the council for approval on Feb. 14.

"I don't know where it ever came up that we were going to start taking signs down," Mayor Bob Jones said. "That was never discussed, and I don't think any one of us would ever think that."

However, after the public comment, the mayor and commissioners opted to table the discussion for further review.

City attorney Bryan Wellner said the ordinance as first drafted did not include the passage about sign removal at the request of the council, but rather it was pieced together using information from similar ordinances in other municipalities.

"The question was asked to me, how do we go about approving these, is there a policy, is there criteria? We looked into it, and there was nothing that we could find that's on the books for how we approve this," Wellner said. "It's common and almost unanimous that if you have honorary street signs, there's a policy in place... for how they're approved. So, I suggested to

the city, how about we create a policy. So, they were in agreement in getting a policy on the books, so I went out and I looked at neighboring communities and my goal was to find a simple policy. We're not going to put a huge onus on the requester, a couple of lines on why this person is special to the city, what you want the street named as."

Wellner said the policy was not created with removal of current signs in mind.

"I can tell you that absolutely not did anyone ask me, can we take down the street signs," Wellner said. "Nobody contemplated that. So, whoever told you that we're going to take down the street signs is not being truthful, or they didn't call the city to ask."

Wellner said the second draft of the proposed ordinance, which removed the street sign removal provision, was rewritten and placed before the council for approval. Wellner also noted that the council could opt to not establish an official policy at all, if they so wished.

Finance Commissioner Doug Money made the motion to table the issue, saying that he and other city leaders wanted to make sure that the ordinance was acceptable before heading in to a vote.

# Park

2021 causing extensive and expensive damage, has finally been replaced. We appreciate everyone's patience and understanding during this lengthy ordeal," the Braidwood Park District posted to social media last week.

The play structure at Goodrich Park on south Maple Street was vandalized, in what appeared to be the result of someone taking a swing at the equipment with a heavy object, leaving holes large enough that a child's leg could easily fall through.

As a result, the Braidwood Park District closed off the area and filed both a police report and an insurance claim. But after the issues were worked out with the insurance company for replacement parts, the long wait

began. Supply chain issues and backorders meant the equipment had to stay roped off for nearly a year and a half.

The issue was complicated in part by the fact that the Braidwood Park District's insurance would not allow a patch or fix in the meantime due to liability issues, should someone be injured on equipment that the park district patched themselves.

The damage left the main playground equipment with five large holes while the district waited.

Outside of the playground equipment, the park was open throughout the waiting period, including a well used half-basketball court that was recently added by the district.

Braidwood Park District updates can be found online throughout the year at [www.braidwoodparkdistrict.com](http://www.braidwoodparkdistrict.com).

# Plan

Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) for creating a new comprehensive plan, a process equivalent to roughly \$150,000. The new plan will replace the city's previous plan, which was passed 19 years ago and is long out of date.

While the meeting was sparsely attended, with only city officials and three members of the public taking part in person and a handful more online, the ideas were still flowing.

The first step in the process, a public survey, was completed in January, with the informal session with CMAP meant as more of a brainstorming effort to push those ideas from the survey to the next level.

"This is some thing that is important for people to understand," CMAP Senior Planner Stephen Ostrander said. "It's called a comprehensive plan. Does it include everything under the sun? No, it doesn't. It does focus on land use and development, especially commercial... and residential, and where it's applicable, where it is relevant, industrial. It also focuses a lot on transportation, basically cars, trucks, walking, pedestrians, bikes, the whole gamut. Things like parks and open spaces... and natural resources and environment. That can include a lot of things. It especially includes water concerns and it includes of course the health and quality of the environment. And then, community facilities, that's everything from [City Hall] to wastewater treatment and the services that are provided in this community. The last one is the image and identity of Braidwood. What we're saying there is, what's the vision of the community? What kind of community does Braidwood want to be and what's the character of Braidwood and how can Braidwood use that to keep it as a great place to live."

Revitalization of downtown was one of the issues brought forward during the Feb. 16 discussion.

Braidwood resident Josh Bolatto,

who is also the city's ESDA coordinator, Braidwood Lions Summerfest operations coordinator, also serves as an elected official with the Braidwood Park District, said revitalization of downtown and opportunities for small businesses are some key items that should be addressed in the plan, as well as commercial or industrial business development on the city's outskirts.

Bolatto also said plans to increase residential areas should be included as part of the plan.

"Being able to afford housing," Bolatto said. "When you look at the houses that are going up around town, they're very nice houses. Being able to build them, being able to get those vacant tax rolls [would bring in] more for the town. That's a huge deal, so they don't sit vacant... Being able to afford that I think is the biggest hurdle."

Results of the initial survey indicate that Bolatto is on track with what others are thinking.

With regard to plans for the future, responders said they'd like to see revitalization in Braidwood's downtown, the addition of a bank, and a larger variety of businesses, as well as more family friendly businesses.

Survey participants also said they'd like to ensure Braidwood is safe for walking, biking and driving. Those participating in the discussion online during the special session said that fixing the city's sidewalks and adding sidewalks where none exist are also a huge concern.

Hosting and promoting more community events, events for families and teens, and maintaining the small town feel of Braidwood—including keeping the crime rate low, creating a community center, enforcing local ordinance laws, and keeping Braidwood from becoming more like bigger cities like Joliet—were all on the list of things responders wanted to see out of the plan.

Ultimately the meeting was a look at the survey, to see what else could be added to the plan, and to get a feel of just what residents are looking for when it comes to Braidwood's future.

The results of the discussion will be

added to the planning documents, as the process will move to the next step.

Meanwhile, there is still an opportunity for public input on the plan, including an interactive map where residents can drop a pin onto a site in Braidwood and comment on what they would like to see improved, added, or even remain the same.

The comprehensive planning site for Braidwood can be found online at [www.engage.cmap.illinois.gov/braidwood-comprehensive-plan](http://www.engage.cmap.illinois.gov/braidwood-comprehensive-plan).

A comprehensive plan is a policy framework, but is not a legally binding document.

The project focuses on key topics, including:

- Encouraging land uses that are appropriate to different areas of the city, which will also leverage the existing transportation network for the best opportunities at economic development while also preserving the quality of life.
- Ensuring that Braidwood provides housing options that meet the needs and preferences of current and potential residents in the future.
- Enhancing Braidwood's walkability and smaller scale commercial areas through placemaking and streetscaping improvements that can further strengthen both Braidwood's accessibility for non-vehicular modes, including residents with disabilities, and the appeal and economic viability of its commercial and residential areas.

Communities that have an updated comprehensive plan are also in a stronger position to apply for county, state, or federal grants. CMAP's role in the creation of the comprehensive plan is to listen to feedback to help craft a plan tailored to the city's needs.

CMAP is the regional planning organization for the counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. CMAP represents 284 municipalities in the region.

CMAP operates under the Comprehensive Regional Planning Fund of the state's Finance Act.

# Not much movement at Wilmington dam

BY MARNEY SIMON EDITOR

WILMINGTON — The Kankakee River and its recreational opportunities came up during the question and answer session of this month's Town Hall meeting, hosted by the Wilmington City Council.

Mayor Ben Dietz answered questions from the public during the Feb. 9 session, including the question of what's happening with the dam.

The future of the Kankakee River dam in Wilmington became a topic of conversation among the members of the City Council back in 2020. At that time, former Alderman Jake Tenn and then-Alderman Dietz brought safety issues back into the public eye.

Modifications at the dam would cost the city millions.

In September 2021, a packed house at Wilmington City Hall listened to a lengthy presentation from members of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Water Resources (IDNR OWR) on options for removing or modifying the dam, and how it would affect the river and mill-race.

Options presented at that meeting include complete removal—which would come at no cost to the city—or adding a rock ramp, would cost the city between \$3 million to \$4 million to complete, but those costs were part of estimates made in 2017, and



A FISHERMAN TAKES advantage of the warmer weather on Sunday, Feb. 19 to reel in the catch of the day near the Kankakee River dam.

are likely more.

While a committee was formed to research the potential for changes at the dam, Dietz told those at the Town Hall meeting that the topic itself is a no-win situation.

"Doing something with the dam, it's like dynamite," Dietz said. "You can't win the argument on either side of that. If you're for taking it out, there are some issues. If you're for modifying it, there are some issues. And, if you're for doing nothing, there are some issues. It's one of those things where we're quietly building those partnerships, getting some state money earmarked for whatever potential there is."

Dietz said the opinion of his administration is that the future of the dam should be decided by the citizens of Wilmington, not the City Council.

Dietz also said he anticipates that the process will like-

ly last through several mayoral administrations.

The city has taken some measures to prevent issues at the dam, including adding a fence, creating an exclusion zone, and increasing fines for people caught in the water.

Dietz also answered questions on why potential plans to add a kayak launch were scrapped almost as soon as they were announced.

"We had an opportunity to go in with Will County Forest Preserve District to add a kayak launch on the North Island, it was an 80-20 split, it would have cost the city somewhere in the neighborhood of \$75,000 to \$80,000. So, a pretty nominal cost for a large project. I was a huge fan of it, we all were a huge fan of it," he said.

But, Dietz said, there were too many legal issues intertwined with the dam to allow for the potential river-based recreation development.

In 2018, the estate of Elizabeth Larson filed a lawsuit against the city following Larson's death almost six years ago. Larson, from downstate Normal, died after the inflatable raft she was in went over the dam in July 2017.

The lawsuit alleges that the city has failed to act to make the dam safer, nor have warnings posted about the safety at the dam been adequate.

Trial in that case is set for August.

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**The Braidwood Journal**  
USPS No. 550-940

Published weekly, 52 times a year, on Wednesdays by G-W COMMUNICATIONS, INC., 111 S. Water St., Wilmington, IL 60481 Periodicals postage paid at Wilmington, Illinois

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to:

The Braidwood Journal, 111 S. Water St., Wilmington IL 60481

Subscription rates: \$43 Grundy & Will counties; \$50 other Illinois counties and \$57 out of state

G.W. Communications, Inc publishes the weekly subscription newspapers named The Free Press Advocate, The Braidwood Journal and The Coal City Courant.

**Advertising and Business Offices:**  
• 111 South Water St., Wilmington, IL 60481 (815) 476-7966; Fax: (815) 476-7002  
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# The many flavors of the melting pot

If there was ever a place that could be called a "melting pot" of nationalities, ethnicities, skin color and religions, it has to be the coal fields of Braidwood and vicinity.



TIME WAS....  
Sandy Vasko

Almost all of these were documented in the invaluable book written by M. J. Donna called *The Braidwood Story*. I only wish he had written his own autobiography because he was such a fascinating man, who lived a fascinating life. Today though, we look at what he told us about the other early pioneer stories.

Donna is quick to point out that not all early settlers came from Europe, some were already here when Braidwood was born in 1865. One of these was James Smith. He was born in New York City in 1860.

After his mother died, he and his brother were put into the infamous Juvenile House, and from there put on an Orphan Train headed for the Midwest. James was adopted by a Wilmington couple, the Adam Whites where he grew to manhood on their farm.

Smith became a pharmacist, taking his practice to Braidwood where he flourished. Eventually he became the President of the First National Bank of Braidwood, served on the school board, and was a City Commissioner. He died in 1937 having served the community for over 57 years.

One of the usually forgotten nationalities

who made their home in the Braidwood vicinity at the end of the 19th century was the Assyrian's.

Assyria was located where the present day northern Iraq and southwestern Turkey are located. Donna mentions the Joseph Nahas family. The Assyrians were not miners, but made their way in life as door-to-door peddlers. This occupation is looked down upon today, but back in then they were an essential part of the community.

Joseph settled in Braidwood in 1898 while his cousins went to Braceville, both making an excellent living as peddlers. Eventually Joseph bought a "bricks and mortar" store. He had six children, two of the boys becoming crack baseball players on the Braidwood Grays team.

Nicholas M. Agamy, another Assyrian, also worked as a peddler, but in 1907 moved to South Wilmington to operate a general store until his death in 1929.

The Belgians are next on Donna's list, starting with Antone Matone family, who arrived in Braidwood in 1869. He worked in the mines for 30 years, raising a family of 8 children. Antone Jr., moved to Wilmington where he had a shoe store in what is now known as the Eagle Hotel.

Another Belgian mentioned is Felecien Francis Ghilain, who Donna described as founding a dynasty in Braidwood. His son Frank, worked in the mines, marrying Marie Katherine Culley in 1879. They had ten children who spread out across the country, becoming superintendents of steel mills, master brick layers, teachers and more.

Bohemia is next on Donna's list. The former country of Bohemia now makes up half of



A PHOTO OF Anton Cermak and his favorite car.

the Czech Republic, The most famous Braidwood Bohemian was, of course, Anton Cermak, Jr. Tony, as he was known in Braidwood, left school at the age of eleven.

He went to Chicago finding work at a sash and door company. He returned to Braidwood during the financial panic, first working at the Peter Rossi Macaroni factory, then later as a mule driver at the I shaft.

He worked for 85 cents a day, and when he asked his boss for a raise, the boss gave him a raise alright, right up the shaft elevator and out onto the street - he got fired. He worked for the E. J. & E in Chicago for a while, saving enough money to buy a team of horses and a wagon, finally becoming his own boss. To make up for his lack of an early education, Tony went to night classes and attended a business college. His interest in politics bloomed and there



A PHOTO of Anton Cermak's funeral in February 1933.

was no stopping him. His steps upward were elected to four terms in the Illinois legislature, Chicago alderman for several terms, Baliff of the Municipal Court in 1912, President of the Cook County Board for 10 years beginning in 1922, defeated for Senator in 1927 but was elected Mayor of Chicago in 1931.

Cermak's life came to a screeching halt on Feb. 15, 1933, almost exactly 90 years ago, when a fanatic named Giuseppe Zangara shot him at a reception honoring the newly elected President of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, in Miami, Florida.

## She gave it a try and ended up going to state

BY MACKENZIE ROMINES  
RCHS STUDENT REPORTER

At Reed-Custer High School, the Speech Team is a group of students who participate in a variety of performance and acting related competitions. There's categories to choose from including improvisation, writing and memorizing essays, and acting out scripts the same way one would for a play.

Students who participate in speech work hard to perfect their skills, and attend practices and events similar to the way someone participating in a sport might. Students on the team compete as individuals, or in small groups.

Sophomore Alice Gruber, who was at first hesitant to join the speech team, advanced to the first round of preliminaries at the state level.

Her mom had done speech in high school, so Gruber wanted to try it as well. She also participates in the school plays and musicals, so Gruber thought that speech could help with her acting skills. Despite this, though, she says she was weary about joining. "I mean, Saturdays at 6 AM?" Gruber jokingly said when talking about her caution. However, she said that she thought it was really fun in the end.

However, she does admit that speech came with stress as well. She said that there were a lot of times she felt overwhelmed, but it was especially stressful when state series drew near.

Nonetheless, she believes that competing has been worth it.

Gruber also believes that it was important for her to find her stride when it came to managing her nerves. When asked about her feelings when she was beginning competitions she stated that "at first it



ALICE GRUBER, a member of the Reed-Custer speech team, recently competed in state preliminaries for speech.

was the most terrifying experience of my life." She says that during her first meet, she completely forgot the eight minute script she had previously memorized. She had to improvise everything on the spot. Gruber eventually switched to competing Impromptu, meaning that she gives speeches with little preparation ahead of time. Gruber says acting comes naturally to her, and having the room to improvise her speeches made her feel much more comfortable than competitions surrounding memorization had. She states that it is easy for her to make her speeches sound conversational, and it's easy for her to make her judges as well as her audience laugh.

Gruber plays saxophone in the school band as well as sings in the choir, and she is in student council. She says that speech has made her better at performing in her other extracurriculars, and in gener-

al has just made her more confident.

Despite her confidence, Gruber believes it is important to focus and calm her nerves. To do that she uses breathing techniques she learned in choir to help her maintain her composure. She also reminds herself that the length she has made it to is impressive, considering the fact that she is not only a sophomore, but also because this is her first year competing. She also knows that colleges will be impressed with her performances the farther she goes, which motivates her to practice harder.

Gruber encourages anyone who is interested in speech to just try it, saying that there is really nothing to lose.

"Worst case scenario; you learn speech isn't for you. Chances are you'll find a category that just screams your name," she said. She also says that the team is very tight-knit, and that joining may help stu-

dents find friends that will last a lifetime. Gruber feels as if the activity not only encourages friendship between teammates, but also between competitors.

She also stresses the importance of pushing oneself to achieve a goal. "Confidence and believing in yourself is so so SO important and the only way to achieve that is to try," she stated.

Gruber expressed her gratitude to her coaches for always being there for her. She wanted to say a special thank you to Ms. Nelson, Ms. Chinksi, Mr. Anderson, and James Reinbacher.

Unfortunately, Gruber returned home from Peoria on Saturday without a medal. Nonetheless, she is proud of how far she made it. Gruber was the only member of her team to compete in preliminaries, and is very happy with what she was able to accomplish this speech season.



## Christian in the Senior Spotlight for February

The Reed-Custer High School Senior Spotlight winner for the month of February is Jace Christian. Jace is the son of Scott and Lynn Christian.

During his high school career, Jace was involved in Football, Basketball, Safe School Ambassadors, and the ICE Leadership Conference. He was a 2-year captain of the football team, was named 3 times to the All-Conference, Academic All-Conference and All-Area teams, was All-State Honorable Mention as a junior and All-State as a senior, and was 2 time Academic All-State. In Basketball, he was All-Conference Honorable Mention and Academic All-Conference Honorable Mention.

His future plans are to attend University of Wisconsin-Platteville to continue his football career and to pursue a career in engineering.

Here are a few thoughts from Jace's teachers.

Mr. Johnston thinks that Jace is "an extremely hard worker and a great leader both on and off the field/court. He holds himself and others around him to a high level. Jace is like having another coach on the field/court or another teacher in the class at all times."

Mrs. Lee says that Jace is "a joy to be around! He is a very hardworking student, and he often goes out of his way to make sure he succeeds. Jace is very kind to everyone and always has a positive attitude!"

Mrs. Leveille remembers having Jace "in Chemistry class, the last period of the day in a very 'challenging' class!! This was also during one of our COVID years. Jace was such a positive force in the class and a true leader. His laid back attitude made it easy for others to understand him as he often helped others in class. He was always polite, respectful, and an all-around nice person."

Mr. Gleixner thinks that Jace is "an outstanding young man and a great leader in and out of the classroom. He is the type of student/athlete any teacher or coach could ask for. He will do great things in the future!"

Mr. Klein acknowledges that Jace is "a great student athlete. He is always looking for ways to give back to the school and community. He has also done a great job showing our younger stu-

dent athletes that hard work and dedication are the keys to success. As much time as Jace has put into sports, he works just as hard in the classroom. There is a bright future ahead for this kid!"

Mrs. Cann says that Jace is "a hard worker—his dedication and determination will take him far! He has always been respectful to his peers and teachers, and he has a good head on his shoulders."

Mrs. Arseneau appreciates that Jace "is a genuinely sweet and likable kid. It has been fun to watch him grow up over the years. Although it has been a while since I had him in class, I know his mindset as a student has remained the same. He values his education and works hard to complete his work, no matter the class or who might also be in that class with him. He is someone that has still kept in touch and checks in, even though I haven't had him since sophomore year. He'll ask about my family or just tell me about a delicious goat cheese salad he had over the weekend! I appreciate the relationships he has built here with students and staff. I wish Jace the best in his future; I know it is bright."

Mr. Wolf believes that Jace is "a terrific student-athlete, one of the best we've ever had here at RCHS. He's a tough kid who plays the part, but is so much more on the inside. People who take the time to get to know him realize what a kind-hearted, loyal, and caring person he is."

Mr. Newson thinks that Jace is "a good student. He's a good athlete. He's a good leader, a good role model. He is kind and respectful. He is responsible and hard working. He is dedicated and focused. Jace Christian is just simply a fine young man."

Mrs. Redwitz says that Jace is "a character! He loves to goof around and it's all in good fun. He is kind, outgoing and has a great personality. He has a warm heart and shows concern for others."

As a final thought, Jace's advice to younger students is, "Work hard, take advice to further your knowledge, don't take anything for granted, and explore all of your options."

On behalf of the teachers and staff at RCHS, congratulations to Jace Christian as the February winner of the Senior Spotlight.

## Heating bill assistance

Low-income families in Illinois can now apply for state assistance on their natural gas, propane and electricity bills.

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, has \$300 million available. Families can apply by visiting [helpillinoisfamilies.com](http://helpillinoisfamilies.com) or by calling 1-833-711-0374. Information on other state assistance programs can be found on that website as well.

LIHEAP provides one-time payments directly to energy service providers on behalf of recipients.

Families who earn up to two times the federal poverty level are eligible for LIHEAP. That works out to a 30-day gross income below \$2,265 for a one-person household, \$3,052 for a 2-person home, \$3,838 for a three-person home, \$4,625 for four people, \$5,412 for five people and \$6,198 for six people.

The level of assistance received is needs-based, and last year's LIHEAP recipients received an average of \$1,330 per household, according to the governor's office.

Will County residents can obtain information through the Will County Center for Community Concerns at [wccc.net](http://wccc.net) or by calling 815-722-3262.

## Is your town giving you proper public notice?

Public notice has been an integral part of the Illinois Compiled Statutes since statehood because it serves several purposes.

Public notice requires governmental entities to tell when hearings are to be held, how money is being spent, what laws are being passed, what property is being sold.

Public notice provides a permanent record of actions that are taken and a legally defensible notification of actions about to be taken.

Public notice is the only way that exact wording can be provided by the entity's counsel.

Newspapers ensure government accountability by acting as an independent third-party. Government officials must ensure that the actions of the government are transparent to the general public.

Publication of public notices in newspapers, independent third parties, helps confirm that the government is accountable to the electorate.

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### 2023-2024 Kindergarten Registration

Registration will be in-person at Reed-Custer Elementary School

**March 1, 2023, 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.**  
**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:	
<b>One document from this column</b> • Mortgage statement • Property tax bill • DEED	<b>Two CURRENT documents from this column</b> • 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:	
<b>One document from this column</b> • Lease	<b>Two CURRENT documents from this column</b> • 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.



Free Press Newspapers readers

# SOUND-OFF

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*Sound-Off is a 24-hour phone line provided to give readers a chance to voice their opinions. Calls may be anonymous.*

*The Free Press Newspapers reserves the right to edit remarks for taste, length, personal attacks, racism, threatening, calls for boycotts and libel. In cases where the publisher selects not to pub-*

*lish these remarks the newspaper makes every effort to forward unpublished comments to the parties to whom they are directed.*

*The comments stated are the opinions and ideas of the callers and not that of the newspaper. Information may not constitute the actual events or facts of a particular topic.*

*Submissions by email to: [courant@fpnusa.com](mailto:courant@fpnusa.com) with "soundoff" in the subject line or go to [www.freepressnewspapers.com](http://www.freepressnewspapers.com). -> Submit Sound-off or call 815-634-0317. Please state the town in which you are calling from or in regards to. Mail comments to Sound-Off, 271 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL 60416 or 111 S. Water St., Wilmington, IL 60481.*

## Rich to the rescue

GOOSE LAKE—I accidentally locked myself out of my home. It was a cold day, I had gone out to get the mail and was unaware that the door had locked behind me. I called two locksmiths in Morris but they were unable to help me. I previously lived in Wilmington and remembered Rich's Lock and Key in Wilmington. He came out as soon as he could, and I thank God for him. I would also like to thank my neighbors Matt and Jessica who allowed me to share the warmth of their home until Rich arrived. Bless you all, Mare

## Negative without facts

BRAIDWOOD—I keep seeing the same negative comments about the city council but have not seen any facts backing it up. The city puts their info out and it can all be checked. Let's see yours. Or could it be the city did what they were supposed to do the right way for the citizens of Braidwood?

## Robin Hoods in reverse

WILMINGTON—As we have seen so often in the past, Republicans are poised to once again play reverse Robin Hoods as they plan to steal from the poor to give to the rich. But during the SOTU speech, President Biden outwitted his critics by making them promise in front of all Americans not to cut Social Security and Medicare. We have proof. It's on tape. Dems will hold the GOP feet to the fire so that the middle class will not be taken hostage by right-wingers who threaten to deny the people what they've earned throughout their hard-working years.

Irene

## Russian Roulette

WILMINGTON—Looking back, when the Wilmington Area Historical Society closed for years and no one came to its rescue. In the year 2016 there was a meeting at the library discussing the future of the museum. Everyone at the meeting agreed to follow the bylaws and constitution. A board was formed from these documents that states its legality of what the pros and cons are. All this time no one questioned the bylaws and constitution until now. A meeting was held on Jan. 25, 2023 with a full house. A new trustee was appointed. Once appointed the trustee had the ignorance to stand up throwing their weight around on rules and regulations. According to this action the person who was appointed just went against the bylaws and constitution. If all these votes were not legal according to the new appointee why are they a trustee now? This is because of the mess from certain board members. The current board was voted to strengthen and straighten out the mess the former board had endured. If this is the case a recommendation came to me from a private phone call suggesting that once in March of 2023 when the new board is in place to contact the Attorney General's Office along with the IRS concerning the museum's 501-c3 status since the land came into existence. Maybe it's time to have this status looked into making sure the new board is following the legal rules of a 501-c3. I think the board which will replace the current board is playing Russian Roulette. Hopefully one day the Historical Society will have a board of directors that actually will do the right thing and respect those who are committed into the path they took.

## Cleaning house

MORRIS—So far U.S. classified documents have been found at several locations of President Biden's many homes plus President Trump's home, plus Vice President Pence's home. That gives Presidents Obama, Bush and Clinton time to clean house before the FBI arrives. Only in America.

## Facts are facts

BRAIDWOOD—Once again the articles about the city of Braidwood are proving how great it is doing with this city council. If you read the article you will see the numbers are checked by an auditing company. Everything is looked at and this council is continuing to improve Braidwood's financial future. You will also read that a previous administration purchased more than a dozen properties totaling 5 acres for combined total of \$2.795 million. Part of this purchase was Rossi field which they paid \$600,000 and was recently appraised for \$77,000. The current administration purchased 66 acres for \$1.8 million with 2 guaranteed businesses that is costing the taxpayers nothing. So a previous administration spent \$550,000 per acre for 5 acres and the only business on any of it is Family Dollar and this administration 14 years later spent \$27,000 per acre for 66 acres with 2 guaranteed businesses. And Fay Smith who continually states he does everything for the city, voted yes to every decision of the past administrations and no to everything this current administration does. To the writer of the negative soundoffs the only one blowing smoke is you. Facts are facts. And now the past administration is trying to get back in office. Maybe they want to repurchase

the five helicopters and finish what they started when they were planning to sell the water treatment plant. You can only speculate the sale would have been to dig themselves out of hole they had put the city in. All this can be proved with documentation.

## Elected to do

BRAIDWOOD—I can't not believe the last city council meeting. With all the tragedy in the world, Braidwood is in great shape when the only time citizens show up to voice concerns is because a street sign might be removed. The only other negativity I ever see is in anonymous sound-offs. Good job to the city council it's obvious you're doing what you were elected to do.

## Meet the Candidates

BRAIDWOOD—Braidwood has a Meet the Candidates coming up. I've seen posts on who has said they will be there and doesn't it figure that the loudest complainers haven't said they'll show up. You're all great at FOIA's why don't you bring the information you've found to Meet the Candidates? I am really interested in hearing your plans. My guess is none of you will show up.

## Only one concern

BRAIDWOOD—I understand that there is a Braidwood candidates night scheduled and another one or two are in the works. I won't be attending any of them for any of the candidates. I only need one question answered by anyone running for city council. Are you going to support the same city administrator for reappointment? If you are, you don't have my vote. If you aren't, you do have my vote. Everything boils down to that one question. Yes or no. It's just that simple.

## One on one

BRAIDWOOD—You can tell it's election time. I see several of the council members are now making reports at the meeting. It's about time. But I was really surprised that Mr. Weitting asked for a tour of the water treatment plant so that he could meet with his employees, take stock of equipment, etc. How long has he been on the council and he is just now doing this? As I said, election time. And I was appalled how he, as a commissioner, would publicly embarrass a city employee at a public meeting. Why not be a responsible leader of the city and take care of any employee issues when they're happening? If he has a problem with any city employee, he should have asked to go into a closed door session to settle it and hear the other side of the story. That is so unprofessional, it's actually juvenile and amounts to nothing more than his ridiculous attempt to grandstand for voters. I surely hope the next council can do better.

## Too early for me

BRAIDWOOD—Regarding the new garbage pickup. For some reason they are coming at 6 a.m. now waking everyone up in the neighborhood. It used to be 7 a.m. When you call the company they say well, city hall gave us the OK to do it at 6 a.m. Go to city hall and they say they don't know and shrug their shoulders so I don't know what can be done. All I can tell the people in Braidwood is if you enjoy getting woken up at 6 a.m. don't do anything. If it bothers you, call city hall and keep complaining.

## Tired of nonsense

BRAIDWOOD- I want to start off by saying as a 30-year resident of this awesome, caring community, I am proud to call this my home. To the person who is responsible in writing all of the negative comments about Braidwood in the sound-off section, do you really think this is improving our community? It is so obvious it's the same person. Each one is well written, and is filled with false insinuations such as: wait and see, only time will tell, let's see who gets this concrete job, smoke and mirrors, don't be fooled, and "to put the icing on the cake." To you, the negative author, you and your team have three and half years of FOIA'd information. Let's see you put your money where your mouth is and let's see what this current administration has done wrong instead of trying to mislead the people. The citizens are tired of your nonsense. Braidwood is out of debt and moving forward. Beautiful homes are being built, as well as the new businesses are coming. Do you really think the people of Braidwood are going to believe you that three car dealerships will not benefit the city? Please give the citizens more credit than that. I love our city, can you say the same thing?

## Count your blessings

MORRIS—Whenever you're having a bad day think about how you would feel if you lived in the Ukraine War or the earthquake in Turkey-Syria area with one million homeless, 90,000 injured, 38,000 dead. They are still searching for victims all that in Turkey-Syria area not counting victims in the Ukrainian War. Good old USA looks pretty good.



## Derailments

COAL CITY—In the month of February 2023 there have been four train derailments, Oregon, Oklahoma, Texas and Ohio, the latest with 11 railcars carrying toxic chemicals very dangerous for the health of those living nearby. Very suspicious.

## Let the young run

MORRIS—Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Republican Governor of Arkansas, 40 years old, gave a beautiful rebuttal speech to President Biden's State of the Union speech. We need more young like her to run for Congress over the old men and women of both parties. Congressmen should get over their need for power and monies and retire. Yet ask yourself who needs the brutal news media to pull you apart and your family if you ran for office, plus the outrageous cost.

## Stop the flow

COAL CITY—Illegal immigration is worse than ever on our southern borders. Plus millions of doses of Fentanyl, enough to kill millions, is being made in China and shipped by drug cartels of Mexico to the USA. Chinese and Iranians are coming into Arizona borders. Fox News, News Max and News Nation will tell the truth on the matter not the standard news media stations. President Biden and VP Harris and some Democrats do nothing about it.

## By omission

BRAIDWOOD—The Braidwood City Council never ceases to provide entertainment. At issue was an ordinance that was on the agenda for approval regarding memorial street signs, just like all other ordinances that have been brought before them for approval by the city administrator for the past four years. I don't recall him ever bringing forth an ordinance that a majority of the council hasn't approved the very night they were on the agenda. And they never have any questions or engage in any discussion prior to their vote. Why would Feb. 14 be any different? But then Mr. Altiery caught wind of a group of angry residents that were not happy with this ordinance and he had to act fast. All of a sudden this ordinance was a "draft" that they wanted public input on. The ordinance wasn't marked "draft" and as we all know, whenever Mr. Altiery wants public input he puts it on the city Facebook page asking for comments. Since it is election time, feel good projects such as a dog park, walking paths and bike paths were the most recent. Never did he ask for input regarding memorial signage. Or maybe the city will buy it for a mere \$1.8 million and give it to you. They also wanted us to believe that the signs that have been previously put on various Braidwood streets would not be taken down. They don't know who said they would be taken down. Well, they also didn't include the wording that these signs wouldn't be taken down either. It was implied by omission. And then, as a last ditch effort, minutes before the meeting was to begin, they made up a new ordinance that they wanted the residents to approve of. Unbelievable.

## Good riddance

WILMINGTON—I hear the people on the right pointing out that people are leaving Illinois and moving to states like Florida and Texas, as if that means something. If the people leaving are who I think they are good riddance. Fold up your Confederate flags and your Pritzker sucks signs and get out.

## What am I?

WILMINGTON—To the caller who opened with "You know who I am," well, I know you are but what am I?

## Parking shortage

WILMINGTON—I see the city council is worried about a couple of parking spaces next to Nelly's. Why aren't they worried about the parking at the VFW? It's not fair to the surrounding businesses to be taken over by the VFW on Wednesdays.

## NASCAR carjackings

SHADOW LAKES—NASCAR is coming to Chicago in July I wonder how many race cars will be carjacked?

Eddie

## Most corrupt

SHADOW LAKES—I believe history books in the future will say the Biden administration was the most corrupt in history because Biden is in China's back pocket.

Eddie

## Wilmington VFW

WILMINGTON—I am a Navy Vet and have been completely turned off on the way Veterans that are not Marines are treated by our local VFW. I thought they represented all branches of the military. I refuse to support this organization now - very sad.

## I honor you

WILMINGTON—To "Just a Housekeeper," I see you. I appreciate you. Very few could do what you do and still you find ways to put your patients first and foremost. Thank you for your service. For Profit Healthcare, Insurance Conglomerates, Big Pharma and most GOP representatives have worked for decades to convince us they can do well by us. Privatize. They have failed time and again. The power of profits is entrenched in our "healthcare." There's no incentive for change. We need systemic change. Please stop electing those who have no heart and talk out of both sides of their mouths. Housekeeper I see you...and I honor you.

## Keep trying

DIAMOND—In response to "Lifelong proud Democrat" in Feb. 15 sound-off. I am a retired sixth grade reading and language arts teacher. That was many moons ago while still teaching the state of Illinois required all elementary school students to meet appropriate grade level writing skills. Sixth graders would be given different topics to write a persuasive essay from either the pro or con perspective. One of my classes was the remedial language arts group. Two language arts teachers taught 130 students how to write persuasive essays. Our school district received a special commendation from the state of Illinois because 100% of sixth grade language arts students passed the state writing requirements. I will approach your article only as one of my students-race, creed, sex, religion or politics will be given absolutely no consideration. I was excited at your enthusiasm and sense of humor when you said "As a lifelong proud Democrat I had a good laugh when I heard that Trump is once again running for president." My excitement began to wane because your next four sentences were negative rhetoric about a conservative ex-president. They were fluent and comprehensive but almost halfway through your article not a single Democrat nor any example of your pride was mentioned. Your next five sentences were about George Santos, freak shows, deniers, dropouts, publicity hounds, conspiracy idiots, crazy right wing nuts, stupidity and lies. Your enthusiasm about being a lifelong proud Democrat fell apart amid that list of negativity and you were sadly living with the results. Had you talked about Democrats and the reason you lived your life so proudly you could have passed the state's sixth grade requirements. Keep trying, stay positive. Sharon

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I wrote last November about my diagnosis of Type 1 Diabetes, my own little effort at education during what was then Diabetes Awareness Month.

But this month I reached an anniversary of sorts, marking one year for a lot of changes, a lot of challenges, a lot of frustration, a handful of tears, a few outbursts (sorry to my husband about that one), and most importantly, a significant amount of gratitude.

Gratitude for my family. Gratitude for my privilege. Gratitude for my life.

On Feb. 17, 2022, somewhere around 4 a.m., weak and sick and finally realizing that what was happening to me was more than just a bad bout with the flu, I woke up my husband and told him I needed to go to the hospital.

"Which one should we go to?" he asked, thinking I was telling him it was time to get in the car and head off to the ER.

"The one the ambulance takes me to," I told him.

It was urgent. I had waited too long to ask for help.

It was pre-dawn on a Thursday, and I had been sick since Tuesday night. I had convinced myself that it was probably the flu. After all, influenza was a bit rampant last year (as it has been this year as well). Ask anyone with children in school, parents have been battling "the mystery virus," one that is not covid, for the bulk of the last two cold and flu seasons.

But, I was ignoring symptoms that I knew were not part of the typical flu. My skin was gray. I couldn't catch my breath. My heart was racing. I was dizzy and disoriented. I had lost track of time. And as the hours progressed, I was only getting worse. I lost the ability first to get up and walk to the bathroom, then later to even sit up in bed. Yet still I was waiting, thinking, the worst will pass.

It did not.

When the endocrinologist in the emergency room at St. Joe's in Joliet said the words "diabetic ketoacidosis," I

immediately started to cry.

My husband was confused, and one of us (but I cannot remember which to be honest) asked how that could possibly be right? I was a Type 2 diabetic. I was well controlled.

"No, you are Type 1," the doctor told us. "You are not well controlled. You need insulin."

I was admitted to the ICU on an insulin infusion. I vaguely remember being told several times that my "gap" wasn't closing as quickly as they had hoped.

I had to look that one up later. The anion gap is the measure of acidity in your blood. It's the rate of positively charged electrolytes to negatively charged ones. The higher the gap, the more acidic your blood is. Too much acidity in your blood equals metabolic acidosis, which is life threatening.

A normal gap is 4-12. Mine was 25 and stubbornly was not budging.

So what happened? How did I end up this way? I had been diagnosed as Type 2 years earlier, so how did it end up that my diagnosis was wrong?

Over the course of time, but no one really knows exactly how much time, my pancreas essentially failed. So, while many T1Ds are diagnosed after a sudden loss in pancreas function, mine took a slow roll, presenting as Type 2 until my pancreas just stopped pushing out beta cells, the cells that create your natural insulin.

When you think of organ failure, you think of transplants. The heart. The lungs. The liver. The kidneys.

But I was in organ failure, it just so happened that the organ was my pancreas.

This past year has been rough. But at least for me, if I was going to have an organ fail, my pancreas was a better



**SIMON SAYS...**  
 Marney Simon

bet. We have good insurance and access to decent healthcare. We are mobile. We are young (hey, 49 is still young, right?).

We are lucky enough to have the tools we need to take care of my T1D.

It's a controllable, though highly frustrating, disease. But without insulin, Type 1s will die.

Some days I am low. Some days I am high. Some days these things both happen in a short period of time, and there is no rhyme or reason to it. Just this past Saturday, my glucose dropped below 40 and stayed there for well over an hour, causing me to become quite fatigued. I bounced back thanks to attention from my husband and a few bags of fruit snacks. Twenty-four hours later, I struggled to bring it down from 200. This is how it goes.

Your glucose is not just affected by food. It's affected by stress, by illness, by lack of sleep, by activity. I have actually had my glucose spike in my sleep because I had a vivid dream. And other times, I have gone high or low, or stayed high or low despite treatment, and there's just no solid explanation as to why.

So here I am again, now that I am at the one year point of my diagnosis, once again imploring anyone reading this to understand a little bit more about diabetes.

You don't have to become an expert. You don't have to develop a deep understanding of the pancreas and how it works.

But awareness. Especially with insulin.

Insulin is the only thing keeping Type 1 Diabetics alive, and it costs entirely too much money. There's always a reason for politicians to say no to the \$35 cap proposal, and it usually involves pork that is hidden inside those bills to reduce the

cost of insulin.

But my argument to you is that \$35 per month is still too much money. I can buy medication to ease my non-life threatening pain over the counter for under \$5, but the medication that actually keeps me alive is \$1,000 per month without my insurance.

That. Is. Insanity.

Drug prices are killing people. A lack of insulin will kill diabetics. You can't diet and exercise your way out of T1D. Insulin is non-negotiable.

High blood pressure can also kill you. But my husband's medication to treat his hypertension only costs a few dollars per month. Why is mine so different? Why are profits put above diabetics?

This past year, I have done a lot to alter my diet. To increase my activity. To learn about my disease, how to administer my insulin and how to administer correction doses, to recognize signs of highs and lows. I've gained back about 40 pounds, because I was unaware that my weight loss had also been a sign of my illness. It was not healthy, but I still don't like it that I gained that all back. But it's better than the alternative.

But the cost to treat my disease will follow me for the rest of my life. And it's not okay.

Please. I'm asking all of you. There are diabetics in your life. And, while T1D was previously referred to as juvenile diabetes, because it was believed to only exclusively affect children, that is simply not the case. No one really knows why the pancreas fails, but it can happen to anyone, at any age. I was 48.

Please learn more. Please support measures that will allow for affordable insulin.

You can learn more about diabetes and diabetes advocacy efforts through the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, www.jdrf.org.

## Hike the three longest trails in to earn Triple Crown

Up your game and your mileage this year by hiking the three longest trails in Will County as part of the Forest Preserve District of Will County's new Will County Triple Crown Hiking Challenge.

The challenge kicks off March 1 and runs through June 30. This program is patterned off the national triple crown challenge which involves hiking the three longest U.S. trails: Appalachian, Continental Divide and Pacific Crest.

"We are taking a fun twist on this idea to encourage people to hike the three longest trails in Will County," said Jen Guest, the Forest Preserve's recreation coordinator. "This program is targeting local outdoor enthusiasts and encouraging everyone else to give extended hiking routes a try."

The challenge requires hikers to walk: the 22-mile Wauponsee Glacial Trail from Joliet to Custer Park, 14 miles of the Old Plank Road Trail from Washington Street in Joliet to Harlem Avenue in Frankfort and 13 miles of the I&M Canal State Trail from McKinley Woods in Channahon to Brandon Road in Rockdale.

Hike all three paths to earn your Triple Crown and a



prize of an adjustable bottle sling cooler with a zipper pouch. Route details will be posted on the Forest Preserve website when the program begins March 1. Submission

requirements include a selfie or landscape photo on each of the three trails.

The free hiking challenge is for ages 10 or older. The program is sponsored by The

Nature Foundation of Will County.

Hiking is an excellent way to stay in shape and spending extended time outdoors can boost your mental health, Guest added. "We hope participants will feel a great sense of accomplishment after completing the challenge," she said.

Participants can walk the routes in their entirety or do them in sections. And hikers can arrange to be picked up or can leave a car ahead on the trail so they don't have to duplicate mileage.

"We encourage you to pack a lunch, bring your binoculars or camera and really get out on the trails," Guest advised. "If you are new to hiking, take it slow. It doesn't matter how you hike it as long as you complete the three longest trails."

For more information on the Forest Preserve District of Will County, visit ReconnectWithNature.org.

## IRS tells taxpayers to wait

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) told Illinois taxpayers to wait to file their 2022 tax returns if they received the special, one-time property tax and/or income tax refund check from the state of Illinois last year.

The IRS was trying to determine if those refunds or payments are taxable by the federal government.

The refund checks in question are the ones that most Illinoisans received last fall and were part of Gov. Pritzker's temporary "tax relief" plan.

This plan received sharp

criticism from Senator Tom Bennett (53rd, Morris), as it was seen as an election-year gimmick by the governor. "At a time when he had the opportunity to provide permanent, long-lasting relief, the Governor instead chose to issue one-time payments that arrived in the mail right ahead of his 2022 election," Bennett said.

The income tax rebate checks were sent to those who earned less than \$200,000 for individual filers, and less than \$400,000 for joint filers. Single filers received \$50 and joint filers received \$100, and those

with dependents received \$100 per dependent up to \$300. The election-year plan also sent property tax rebates up to \$300 to homeowners.

It was determined that these payments are not taxable on the state level; however, it is unclear if the refunds are federally taxable.

On Friday it looked as though the IRS will not challenge the taxability of payments related to general welfare and disaster relief.

This means that Illinois taxpayers do not need to report these state payments on their 2022 tax return.

## REO Speedwagon returning to the Illinois State Fair stage

The Illinois Lottery Grandstand will be rocking when REO Speedwagon returns to the Illinois State Fair on Tuesday, Aug. 15. The group, which was loosely formed in the late 1960's at the University of Illinois, has been a constant in the rock world over the last five decades.

From their chart-topping rock love ballads "I Can't Fight This Feeling Anymore" and "Keep On Loving You" to rock

classics like "Ridin' the Storm Out" and "Keep Pushin," REO will bring a catalog of songs that span generations.


"REO Speedwagon always bring everything they have to the stage," said Illinois State Fair Manager Rebecca Clark. "In the over 50 years they have been together, there has not been a year where REO Speedwagon didn't perform live. This will be one of those performances where we will be

able to hear the crowd singing along throughout the whole fairgrounds."

Their 2023 stop will mark the groups seventh time headlining at the Illinois State Fair, the last coming in 2013. Ticket sales for announced shows will go on sale at a date that is yet to be determined.

Mark your calendars for the 2023 Illinois State Fair, running August 10 through 20 in Springfield.

**Thank You!**



Front Row L to R: Declan Crutchfield, Caleb Machalek, Henry Lewis, Cain Machalek. Back Row L to R: Ryan Sukley, Liam Sukley, Luke Medlin, Chase Brueggert, Kasey Kolb, Chase Chandler.

The Wilmington Wildcats 11u Baseball team hosted their first Trivia Night this past weekend and wanted to thank the following businesses for their donations and support: Kathy and James at the Wilmington VFW for your hospitality and patience with us as we navigated our first ever trivia night - we couldn't have done it without you both!

Derek Hogberg and City Pizza & Sub for donating all of the pizzas for the tables - your pizza and support of these kids and the Wilmington community is second to none!!

Kelly Van Duyn for being our emcee for the evening and loving and supporting these boys like your own; Joey Rivera and Consolidated Pipe & Supply Co., Nick Dziuban, Brieser Construction, Trinity Barkery, Cici & Lala's, Rich Kuchar and the Chicago White Sox, Elizabeth Strong, Wilmington Park District, Nelly's, Old School Brewery, The Wine Cafe, Riverfront Lanes, Bryce Antos, The Flower Loft, Melinda Mounts, and Marty Orr - thank you all for your donations, generosity and support of Wildcats 11u baseball!



# Chamber trophy a farewell to Ed Koziol



THE EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH trophy didn't travel far this month, staying at Arnie Bauer Chevy-Buick to honor long-time service manager Ed Koziol (left) who is retiring. Presenting the trophy is Angela Eartley who works the front office at the Wilmington dealership who named the employee of the month during January. Ed will retire at the end of February. The customers, community and the Chamber wish him well in retirement.

# Hospital to host open house to view surgical suites

The community will have an opportunity to tour Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers new, state-of-the-art Surgical Services Suite during an open house scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 26, from 1-3 p.m. at Morris Hospital, 150 W. High St., Morris. Guests should enter through the hospital main entrance off High Street.

On the tour, community members will see Morris Hospital's new operating rooms, the new ambulatory surgery rooms where outpatient start and end their surgical visit, and the new sterile processing area where surgical instruments are cleaned, sterilized, and transported to the operating rooms.

"We recently notified the Illinois Department of Public Health that we are ready for the inspection that is required before we can begin using our newly constructed surgical area for patient services," explains Tom Dohm, President & CEO of Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers. "In the meantime, now is the perfect opportunity for community members to come and see this very impressive area of our hospital that is typically reserved for patients who are having surgery."

Along with three new replacement operating rooms

that were built for today's modern technology, the \$13.2 million renovation project is resulting in five additional private ambulatory surgery rooms, new sterile processing facilities and sterile core hallway, a holding area for inpatients who are having surgery, improved storage for surgery and anesthesia equipment, and new locker rooms, work space and break room for staff.

While outpatients having surgery will continue to enter the building through the main lobby and check in at the registration desk, once the new surgical services area opens, surgery patients will leave the hospital through a dedicated exit on the west side of the building, offering greater privacy for surgical patients when leaving the hospital.

The cost of the project also includes new equipment along with a dedicated heating, ventilation and cooling system for the surgical area of the hospital.

The next phase of renovations will involve turning the current operating rooms into new procedure rooms for gastrointestinal (GI), bronchoscopy, and other procedures involving anesthesia. The second phase will also result in dedicated surgical consult rooms and a new sur-

gical waiting room, giving support persons who accompany surgical patients a dedicated area to wait while their loved one is in surgery. Renovations to the Post Anesthesia Care Unit and Ambulatory Surgery department are expected to take place in a later phase of construction.

Dohm said that the upgrade to the surgical area of the hospital has been part of the hospital main campus modernization plans for some time but had to occur in sequence.

"Three years ago at this time we were celebrating the opening of our new emergency department, infusion therapy center, women's imaging center, outpatient laboratory, and main lobby," he said. "Since then, we completed renovations to our cardio-diagnostics and imaging departments, along with the interventional prep/recovery area adjacent to the cath lab. The changes that we have been making over the past few years have created the space needed to bring state-of-the-art surgical facilities to our community." "We hope everyone will take the opportunity to come and see for themselves during our surgical services open house on Feb. 26."



Tour the NEW state-of-the-art Surgical Services Suite!

# community Open House!

Over the past four years, we have been renovating our hospital main campus as part of a major modernization project.

The latest renovations are resulting in:

- 3 NEW operating rooms
- 5 NEW Ambulatory Surgery rooms where patients start and end their outpatient surgery experience
- NEW Sterile Processing facilities for cleaning, storing, and transporting instruments used during surgery
- NEW private exit for patients leaving the hospital after having surgery

This is just the first step in a multi-phase project that will modernize our entire Surgical Services Suite!

**Sunday February 26 1-3 pm**

Morris Hospital  
150 W. High St., Morris  
*Please enter through the main lobby off High Street.*



**MORRIS HOSPITAL**  
& HEALTHCARE CENTERS

www.morrishospital.org

## IDENTITY THEFT TIP

Don't overshare on social media. A simple post about a first pet, first car or favorite high school teacher can give scammers the information they need to hack into your account.

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We'll help you sign up for players rewards on our new kiosk!

**\$1 million** scratch off Lottery Ticket sold here in December!

SCAN TO DOWNLOAD THE AE PLAYER APP TO CHECK IN AND VIEW THIS MONTH'S PRIZES!

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

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Email submissions or if you have questions contact: GymshoeArt@gmail.com

**Drawing by Katherine Staton**

"The rainbow!"

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**COREY'S CRUSADERS PRESENTS...**

**SPAGHETTI DINNER & RAFFLE BASKET**

*Fundraiser*

FOR **COREY SMITH**

**MARCH 5TH, 2023 4 - 7 p.m.**

**DINNER TICKETS \$10 EACH**  
Ticket includes: Spaghetti w/meat sauce, Garlic Bread, Bottled Water  
Eat in or take out!

**RAFFLE BASKET TICKETS:**  
\$1 per ticket  
\$5 for 6 tickets  
\$10 for 12 tickets  
\$20 for 24 tickets

**All Ticket sales and other funds raised will be given directly to the Smith family!**

**LOCATION:**  
Goose Lake Hall  
3935 Goose Lake Rd.  
Morris, IL 60450

\*Drawing will be held at 7 p.m. after dinner and winners will be contacted via phone. All baskets must be picked up at hall by 8 p.m. that night (unless other arrangements have been made)



# OBITUARIES

## Brian DuBois

APPLETON, WI—Brian Andrew DuBois, 55, of Appleton, WI, formerly of Braidwood, passed away Monday, Feb. 13, 2023 in Wisconsin. Born on April 18, 1967 in Joliet, he was the son of Richard and Ann DuBois. As a young boy Brian loved all sports, but baseball was his passion. He was very competitive and always felt the need to win. Brian graduated in 1985 from Reed-Custer High School. That same year he was drafted to the Baltimore Orioles, then went on to play with the Detroit Tigers. After his years of playing in the MLB he continued work with AT&T and also enjoyed his time coaching.

He is survived by his mother, Ann DuBois, of Wilmington; his sons: Tyler, of New Jersey; Bryan (Kayla), of Springfield, IL and Zach (Nikki), of Springfield; granddaughter, Emmy Maye of Springfield; siblings: Dennis (Kelly Larkin) DuBois, of Essex; Christine (the late Jeff), of Braidwood, Laura (Randy Davis)



DuBois, of Gardner; niece, Kaylee Crompt; nephew, Ryan Garbin and girlfriend, Elizabeth Lehrer, of Wisconsin.

Preceding him in death were his father, Richard DuBois; maternal grandparents, Eldon and Laura Flint; paternal grandparents, Andrew DuBois and Catherine Reaney and brother-in-law, Jeff Crompt. Cremation rites have been accorded. Memorial visitation for Brian will be at the R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory, Saturday, Feb. 25, 2023 from 11 a.m. until the time of memorial services beginning at 1 p.m.

For more information and to visit his online guestbook, please log on to [www.rwpatersonfuneralhomes.com](http://www.rwpatersonfuneralhomes.com) or find them on Facebook.

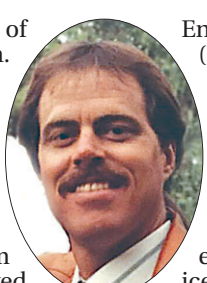
R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory, 401 E. Main St., Braidwood is in charge of arrangements.

## Mark Enz

TEMPE, AZ—Mark John Enz, 70, of Tempe, AZ, passed away Saturday, Jan. 21, 2023.

Born Oct. 28, 1952, in Clinton, IA, Mark John was a son of Robert Mark and Wilma Jean (Potter) Enz. During Mark's childhood, he lived in Japan, France and Germany before the family settled in Wilmington. He attended St. Rose School and graduated from Wilmington High School where he played football, basketball and baseball (class of 1970). Mark furthered his education at Lewis University, where he majored in education. At Lewis University, Mark played baseball as an outfielder and during this time his team won two NAIA National Championships. ('74, '75). After college, Mark worked alongside his father for the family landscaping business, Enz Landscaping, in Arizona and went on to make a home for himself there. Mark loved spending time skeet shooting with his brothers while growing up, and won the European Junior Championship while in France in 1963. Mark will be remembered for his quick wit, intelligence and fun loving personality.

Survivors include his one daughter, Amnesty (Noah) Sherwood; one brother, Martin (Sarah) Enz; four nieces: Christy (Ryan Dwyer)



Enz, Michelle (John Sullivan) Enz, Renee (Tyler) Crater, and Alicia Enz, and one nephew, Martin (Gina) Enz.

Mark was preceded in death by his parents, Robert Mark and Wilma Jean Enz; two brothers, Robert Enz and William Enz, and one sister, Rhonda Jefferson.

Cremation rites have been accorded, and a memorial visitation and service is being planned.

Mark will be laid to rest in Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wilmington along with his parents and sister, Rhonda.

A complete obituary will follow as information becomes available.

Preferred memorials in lieu of flowers may be made as memorials to benefit Mark's daughter, Amnesty.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto [www.BaskervilleFuneral.com](http://www.BaskervilleFuneral.com) to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Mark's memorial page online through social media.

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

## Judith L. Lavicka

BRAIDWOOD—Judith L. Lavicka, 68, of Braidwood, passed away Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023 at Morris Hospital.

Born Feb. 19, 1954 in Joliet, she was the daughter of George and Norberta (nee Kinkin) Lavicka. A lifelong Braidwood resident for 34 years, she was employed at Fox Developmental Center in Dwight as a tech and ATR instructor. She was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Braidwood, Goose Lake Prairie Partners, Braidwood Area Historical Society and Livingston County Humane Society. After her retirement Judith also volunteered at Fox Developmental Center and both Braidwood and Wilmington Libraries. She enjoyed researching genealogy and history.

Surviving are her mother, Norberta Lavicka, of Braidwood; brother, Tony (Vicki) Lavicka, of Shorewood; sister, Jeannie (Will) Bell Thomas, of Braidwood; nieces and nephews: Robin (Paul) Duffey, Jennifer Lavicka,



Christopher (Stacy) Bell and Joshua Lavicka; great-nieces and great-nephews: Amelia, Brianna, Kaitlyn and Daisy Bell; Zoey and Zachary Duffey and Maleah and Chase Lavicka.

Preceding her in death was her father, George Lavicka.

Funeral services were held on Sunday, Feb. 19, 2023 at the R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory in Braidwood. Cremation rites were accorded following the service.

Memorial donations may be directed to the Livingston County Humane Society, 21179 N. 1358 East Rd., Pontiac, IL 61764.

For more information and to visit her online guestbook, please log on to [www.rwpatersonfuneralhomes.com](http://www.rwpatersonfuneralhomes.com) or find them on Facebook.

R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory, 401 E. Main St., Braidwood was in charge of arrangements.

## Betty Oswald

BROADVIEW, IL—Betty Oswald, 80, of Broadview, IL, passed away Monday, Feb. 13, 2023 at Aperia Care in Wilmington.

Born Sept. 1, 1942 in Chicago, Elizabeth Ann was the daughter of William and Catherine (nee Daley) Hutcherson. She was raised in Broadview and graduated from Proviso High School. On March 27, 1963, Betty married Donald Raymond Oswald Sr. She worked for many years at Century 21 Real Estate in Darien, and she also volunteered her time with numerous organizations. Betty volunteered with the Brookfield Zoo and the Darien Public Library where she helped start the Bookmobile program. She was a past member of Saint Mary Catholic Church in Darien where she participated with the Golden Hands.

Betty loved to go to garage sales and enjoyed reading, especially romance novels. She was a truly kind and generous heart, always making sure to volunteer her time with the elderly and those in need. Betty was a loving mother and grandmother who leaves behind a beautiful collection of family and friends who will



miss her dearly.

Survivors include her three children: Wendy Oswald, of Wilmington; Christine Oswald, of Bonfield and Donald (Heather) Oswald Jr. of Queen Creek, AZ; nine grandchildren: Robert, Victor, Nicole, Neil, Nicholas, Lily, Ashton, Bailey and Daisy; 10 great-grandchildren: Collette, Joey, Alex, Donald, Bentley, Hunter, Elizabeth, Ben, Kolton and Weston, with another expected in July and several nieces and nephews.

Betty was preceded in death by her parents and her husband, Donald; and one brother, James Hutcherson.

Per Betty's wishes, cremation rites are being accorded and services will be planned at a later date.

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

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

## David Smith

MORRIS—David Smith, 59, of Morris, passed away Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023 at Bethany Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center in DeKalb, IL.

Born Dec. 5, 1963 in Morris, David Maurice was a son of Robert and Betty (Christensen) Smith. He was raised and educated in Morris and graduated from Morris High School with the class of 1981. He worked as an automotive mechanic for several years in Wilmington before gaining employment with Empress Casino in Joliet where he would work for the next 28 years.

Dave was proud to have founded and be past president of the Morris VFW Men's Auxiliary, working to raise funds and support veterans in need. He was a member of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Morris and also volunteered his time with the Corn Fest Committee. Dave loved hotrods and working on cars, and especially enjoyed watching NASCAR. He took great pleasure in going golfing with friends and watching movies, and was always willing to lend a helping hand to



anyone in need.

Survivors include his son, Matthew (Kailey) Smith, of Morris and his granddaughter expected in March; his brother and sister: Reverend Richard Smith, of Naperville and Deborah (Chris) Gough, of DeKalb; several nieces and nephews, and numerous relatives and friends.

Dave was preceded in death by his parents and one daughter in infancy, Shelby Dawn Smith.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held Monday, Feb. 20, 2023 at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Morris celebrated by Reverend Richard Smith, and burial followed at Mount Carmel Catholic Cemetery in Morris.

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

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

## Richard G. Reichman Jr.



COAL CITY—Richard G. Reichman Jr., "Dick," 68, of Coal City, formerly of Crest Hill, passed away Monday, Feb. 13, 2023 at Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, IL.

Born July 15, 1954 in Joliet, Richard George was a son of Richard Sr. and Marilyn (nee Cantu) Reichman. He was raised and educated in Crest Hill and graduated from Romeoville High School. He attended Joliet Junior College, and then went on to serve in the United States Navy from 1973 until his honorable discharge in 1979. While in the service, Dick would meet Teresa Southerland, and on April 2, 1978 they married in Charleston, SC. They later moved to Illinois where they would live and raise their family.

Dick was a computer architect who owned and operated Vital Analysis Consulting Services for 23 years. After retiring, he continued to utilize his skills and abilities, doing jobs and contracted services until recently. Dick enjoyed water sports and boating. He was also a private pilot and built his own ultralight aircraft. Dick took great pleasure in restoring vintage motor-



cycles.

Survivors include his wife of 44 years, Teresa Reichman, of Coal City; two children, Richard Reichman III (Tina Wesolowski), of Tellico Plains, TN and Marlaina (Chris) Figge, of Morris; three grandchildren: Marie Reichman and Marina and Drake Figge; one brother and one sister: Marilou Reichman, of Plainfield and Mark (Joan) Reichman, of Hawaii; and several nieces and nephews.

Dick was preceded in death by his parents, Richard and Marilyn Reichman.

Per his wishes, cremation rites are being accorded.

Funeral services with full military honors were held Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2023 at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood.

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

Cremation services and memorial arrangements were made under the direction and care of Reeves Funeral Homes, Ltd. in Coal City.

## Robert Swisher Jr.

BRACEVILLE—Robert Leroy Swisher Jr., 74, of Braceville, passed away Feb. 4, 2023 at home with his loving family by his side.

Born Aug. 31, 1948 in Joliet, he was the son of Robert Sr. and Clara Louise Swisher. He married Pat Parkinson Smith on March 22, 1975. Bob spent over 20 years bringing smiles and joy to households throughout the area every Christmas season with his white beard, rosy red cheeks and his Santa suit with the big "SC" belt buckle. His favorite moments were when he and his wife, Patricia and close friend, Donny Hart were all on Harleys riding to Sturgis, SC and beyond. He also enjoyed moments with a house full of children and grandchildren at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Survivors include his wife, two sons, Robert III (Dyanna) of Braceville and Roy of Wilmington; daughter-in-law, Gayla Smith, of Ottawa; sons-in-law, Greg Williams, of Coal City and Jeff (Dana) Blatti, of Braceville; granddaughters: Holly Swisher, Kathryn (Robert) McLuckie, of Coal City; Morgan Crosby, of Naperville; Kaly Jo Swisher, of LaGrange; GA;



Nicole (Ken) Mack, of Morris; grandsons:

Robert IV (Tonya) of Braceville; Gage Swisher, of Morristown, TN; Robert Christopher Blatti, of Streator; Jeffrey (Nicole) Blatti, of Diamond; Patrick Wren (Carrie), of Chicago; Chad Williams, of Mazon; great-grandchildren: Josie, Belle, Ripley and Toby Swisher; Ronald, Jayden, Damon and Jackson Blatti; Colton and Vincent Blatti; Kane and Mack and one on the way McLuckie; Grace, KC, Lane, Liam, Jackson and Owen Mack; Colten Williams; one sister, Kathleen Noel (Tom) and one sister-in-law, Doris Swisher, both of Wilmington and several nieces and nephews.

Bob was preceded in death by his parents, two brothers, Ronald and Michael; two daughters, Jerri Lynn Blatti and Roycann (Rocky) Williams and one son, Richard Smith.

Cremation rites have been accorded. A private service will be held at a later date to be determined.

Family and friends are encouraged to share on line through social media with photos or share any memories of his life.

## Arland E. Percy Jr.

WILMINGTON—Arland E. Percy Jr., 62, of Wilmington, and formerly of Joliet, passed away unexpectedly on Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2022 at Silver Cross Medical Center in New Lenox.

Born Sept. 20, 1960 in Mattoon, IL, Arland Edward was a son of Arland "Edward" Percy Sr., of Diamond and the late Linda Jean (Paden) Percy. He attended Laraway School and graduated from Joliet East High School with the class of 1978. Following high school, Arland worked in the Steel Mills before gaining employment with the city of Wilmington Water Department. Most recently he had been working security.

On Oct. 1, 1994, Arland married Brenda (nee Davis) in the First Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, and together they made their home together in Wilmington. Over the years, Arland took pleasure in playing baseball and fishing, and was a fan of all sports, particularly following the Chicago Blackhawks and Chicago Cubs. He enjoyed old movies and radio shows, and had a love of animals, especially his dogs. To his family he was known to be a gentle giant and never mean, vindictive or aggressive to anyone. Arland always enjoyed making people laugh and will be remembered for his witty sense of humor.

Survivors include his wife, Brenda; father,



Ed Percy; two sisters, April Veerman, of New Lenox and Georgianna (Jeff)

Shenk, of Braidwood; his mother-in-law, Annette Kincheloe and brother-in-law, Douglas Davis, both of Wilmington, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Arland was preceded in death by his mother, Linda Percy; brother-in-law, Brad Veerman; maternal and paternal grandparents, and his father-in-law, Benjamin Kincheloe.

Cremation rites have been accorded. The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd. in Wilmington on Saturday, Feb. 25, 2023 between the hours of 12 and 3 p.m.

Any mail correspondences may be directed to the family c/o Baskerville Funeral Home.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto [www.BaskervilleFuneral.com](http://www.BaskervilleFuneral.com) to sign the guestbook, upload photographs and share Arland's memorial page online through social media.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Arland's memory to his family for their distribution.

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

## Laura "Mikie" Valdez

COAL CITY—Laura "Mikie" Valdez, 74, of Coal City, passed away Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023 at Morris Hospital.

Born Sept. 16, 1948 in Marion, IL, Laura Michelle was a daughter of Robert and Freda (Vaughn) Schellenberger. She lived in several states throughout her youth, until her family settled in Minooka where she graduated from high school. Mikie attended Joliet Junior College for legal studies, and on Dec. 19, 1970 she married Maximo Valdez in Morris.

She spent the first few years of marriage on the east coast while Max was serving in the United States Navy, where she worked on the Naval Bases. Following their return to Illinois, Mikie was a stay at home mom to care for her children. She then owned and operated The Yarn Bin in Coal City, until she began her career as a paralegal. She worked for the law offices of Mueller and Garretson in Morris and Bateson and Taylor in Joliet for over 20 years. Mikie was always volunteering her time with programs such as Operation St. Nick and Easter Seals in Joliet, and with Operation Firm Handshake who hosts the annual Veterans Picnic at the Coal City Area Club. She also was co-owner and office manager of Midwest Bedliners in Coal City from 1999 to 2021.

Mikie was an avid quilter who shared her talents in many ways. She would showcase her quilts which were featured at several quilting shows, but also generously donated countless quilts through fundraisers and donations. Mikie was involved in the Pieces from the Heart Quilt Guild and also had a local group that would meet once a month to share their talents together. She made sure that each family member received a beautiful quilt from her, sometime for an occasion, but often just to have as a token of her love.

Family was always Mikie's number one priority and she relished time with her children



and grandchildren. She loved spending time camping and pontoon boating out at the area club. Mikie was a great baker as well, specializing in peach pie, and would often share her baked goods with any and all. Her big heart and generous nature was well known to many and will be missed dearly by those who knew and loved her.

Survivors include her husband of 52 years, Max Valdez, of Coal City; two daughters, Moree (Bud) Harney, of Coal City and Kristina Carmen, of Coal City; four grandchildren: Maximo Valdez II, Frank Carmen, Lilly Harney and Xander Carmen; one sister, Nancy (Joe) Dunn, of Delaware, OH; five brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: Eddie Valdez, of Coal City; Jesse Valdez, of Coal City; Teresa (Roberto) Cortez, of Diamond; Manuel Ramat, of Joliet and Ben Minor, of Joliet; one uncle, Sherman "Spud" Vaughn, of Romeoville and numerous nieces and nephews.

Mikie was preceded in death by her parents, two sisters, Connie (Lloyd "Red") Crosby and Darla "Deeg" Fuller; mother-in-law, Martha Consuelo Ramat; one sister-in-law, Carmen Minor and one niece and great-nephew: Melinda and Jaxon Cullen.

Funeral services were held Monday, Feb. 20, 2023 at Reeves Funeral Home in Coal City. The live stream can be accessed via Mikie's memorial page.

Cremation rites were accorded, and Mikie was laid to rest at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Mikie's memory to Max for the benefit of Mikie's family.

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

Funeral services and cremation arrangements were made under the direction and care of Reeves Funeral Homes, Ltd. in Coal City.



# OBITUARIES

## Mary Hansen

WILMINGTON—Mary Hansen, 87, of Wilmington, passed away Saturday, Feb. 18, 2023 at the Lightways Hospice Home in Joliet.

Born Sept. 6, 1935 in Schneider, IN, Mary Ann was a daughter of Louis and Anna (Martin) Camus. She was raised and educated in Lowell, IN, where she graduated high school. On Oct. 9, 1954, Mary married Richard "Bootsy" Hansen in Wilmington, and together they made a home and raised their family in Wilmington. Mary worked at Johnson & Johnson Personal Products before gaining employment with Precision Components, where she worked until retiring. In her free time, Mary enjoyed jigsaw puzzles, playing cards and going to Bingo.

Survivors include her son, Rick (Becky) Hansen, of Wilmington; seven grandchildren: Alicia (Robert) Bolser, Michael Hansen, Curtis (Colleen) Hansen, Jeremy (Kim) Durham, T.J. (Krista) Hansen, Brad Meyer and Nick (Deanna) Hansen; 12 great-grandchildren: Brock, Isabel, McKenzie, Kylie, Kody, Olivia, Ella, Carsyn,



Mason, Noah, Carter and Owen; one brother, Robert Camus and one sister, June Smith, as well as nieces and nephews.

Mary was preceded in death by her parents, one son, James Glen Hansen; one daughter, Diana Meyer; three brothers: Louis Jr., Ronnie and Richard, and three great-grandsons: Caden, Connor and Elijah.

Cremation rites have been accorded and there will be no services. A private inurnment will be in Oakwood Cemetery in Wilmington at a later date.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Mary's memory to Kuzma Care Cottage, 635 S. Main St., Wilmington, IL 60481.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto [www.BaskervilleFuneral.com](http://www.BaskervilleFuneral.com) to sign the guestbook, upload photographs and share Mary's memorial page online through social media.

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

## Judy Crawford

WILMINGTON—Judy Crawford, 69, of Wilmington, passed away unexpectedly on Saturday, Feb. 18, 2023 at her home.

Born March 12, 1953 in Paducah, KY, Judy Ann was a daughter of Lester and Macie Crawford. She was raised and educated in Wilmington, and worked many years locally at R-Way Plastics.

One who cherished her family and enjoyed spending time with friends, Judy also took pleasure in putting puzzles together, playing cards and bingo, and baking. She was a great fan of Elvis and was dedicated to the care of her bird, 'Little Annette.'

Survivors include three siblings: Joann (the late Jerry) Giasson, of Washburn, IL; Johnny Crawford, of Wilmington and Lloyd Crawford, of Essex; one brother-in-law, Bob Neese and numerous nieces and nephews, as well as great-nieces and great-nephews.

Judy was preceded in death by her parents, siblings: Robert (Betty) Crawford, Lester Ray Crawford, Betty Sue Neese and Annette



Crawford; two nieces: Deb Neese and Penny Crawford; one nephew, Robert Neese, and one great-niece, Grace.

Cremation rites have been accorded.

The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd. in Wilmington on Sunday, Feb. 26, 2023 from 12 p.m. until time of service at 2 p.m.

She will be laid to rest in Oakwood Cemetery in Wilmington with her parents.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Judy's memory to Luries Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto [www.BaskervilleFuneral.com](http://www.BaskervilleFuneral.com) to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Judy's memorial page online through social media.

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

## Phillip Kodat

CARBON HILL—Philip Douglas Kodat, 79, a long-time resident of Carbon Hill, passed away on Saturday, Feb. 18, 2023 at Morris Hospital.

Philip was born March 12, 1943 in Morris to Leonard Kodat and Mary Walsh Kodat. He attended school in Coal City, graduating with the class of 1961. That same year, he joined the United States Army and was stationed in Germany until 1964. There, he met and married Karin Baechtle. Phil worked for 30 years at Caterpillar in Joliet. His love was working in his garden, raising flowers and vegetables. He enjoyed woodworking and building patio furniture. Phil also raised bees and had over 200 hives for honey. He was a trustee for the Village of Carbon Hill and also for Felix Township.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Karin Kodat; his son, Thomas Kodat, of Winston Salem, NC; one granddaughter, Mary Kodat Metz, of Little Rock, AK; one great-grandson, Henry Metz, of Vacaville, CA; his brother, George (Rita) Kodat; his sister, Judy (Rich) Martin and sister-in-law, Ana Koval and many nieces and nephews in both the United States and in Germany.

He was preceded in death by his parents,



Leonard and Mary Kodat and his brothers, Tom and Pete.

Memorials in Phil's name may be made to Just Animals Shelter, 505 Depot St., Mazon, IL 60444 or the Carbon Hill Historical Society and School Museum, 875 N. Second St., Carbon Hill, IL. 60416

Cremation rites have been accorded.

A "Celebration of Life" visitation will be held from 2-4 p.m. on Sunday, March 12, 2023, which would have been Phil's 80th Birthday, at Ferrari Funeral Services, 1044 Ferrari Dr., Coal City, IL 60416. A "Celebration of Life" memorial service will begin at 4 p.m., also at Ferrari Funeral Services.

Inurnment with full military honors will be at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, March 13, 2023 at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, 20953 W. Hoff Rd., Elwood, IL 60421. Family and friends wishing to attend may meet at the cemetery Information Center at 10:15 a.m.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guestbook at [www.ferrarifuneral.com](http://www.ferrarifuneral.com).

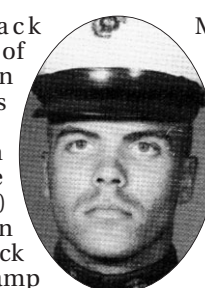
Ferrari Funeral Services of Coal City is entrusted with arrangements.

## Jack Stoner

CHILLICOTHE—Jack Lawrence Stoner, 76, of Chillicothe, passed away on Monday, Feb. 13, 2023 at his home.

Jack was born on Oct. 14, 1946 in East St. Louis, IL to George Lawrence and Genevieve Glendora (Harness) Stoner. He married Elaine Lee Clark on Aug. 20, 1976 in Edwardsville, IL. Jack served in the U.S. Marines at Camp Lejeune, NC during Vietnam. He then was a boilermaker with the Local #1 in Chicago. He was also a member of the VFW Post #4999 in Chillicothe.

Surviving are his wife, Elaine; his children, Andrew Stoner, of Decatur, IL; Angela Marie Luck, of Chillicothe and Jennifer Lynn (Brett)



Mellen, of Chillicothe; his grandchildren: Jack Henry Mellen, Genevieve Sumner and Lucy Mellen; his sister, Diane McDonald, of Greenville, OH and his nieces and nephews. Also surviving is a special friend and caregiver of Jack and Elaine, Geanna Atkinson.

He was preceded in death by his parents and two sisters, Georgia Stoner and Sandra Reed.

Services with military honors were held on Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2023 at Weber-Hurd Funeral Home in Chillicothe. Cremation rites were accorded following the services.

Memorials may be made to the Veteran's Memorial in Chillicothe.

Online condolences may be made through [www.weberhurdfuneralhome.com](http://www.weberhurdfuneralhome.com).

## Tom Bishop Sr.

BRAIDWOOD—Tom J. Bishop Sr., 69, of Braidwood, left to join his beloved son and daughter in Heaven on Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023.

Tom was born in Effingham, IL on Oct. 23, 1953 to Donald and Bessie (Warner) Bishop. He was the eighth of 10 children. Tom spent time growing up in Mason, Elwood, Braidwood and a little time in Indiana. He was a 1972 graduate of Joliet East High School.

As a teenager Tom spent his time learning the art of masonry eventually starting his own union business, Bishop Masonry Inc. Tom was a successful and respected businessman for many years. Tom's first bout with cancer ended his business days but not his life. He fought a long and courageous battle with the effects of his extended treatments giving him 16 extra years with his family. A stronger man you will not meet.

Tom always enjoyed outdoor activities. Many years were spent camping, fishing, water-skiing, riding his motorcycle and hunting Morell mushrooms with his family. Fishing on the Saint Joe River in Michigan was one of his greatest joys. Most of all Tom loved his family. His grandchildren brought him much joy in his later years. It was a normal thing to find him sitting on the floor playing cars or in his chair baby-sitting baby dolls. He will be truly missed by his whole extended family.

He is survived by his loving wife of 45 years,



Diane (Kezerle); sons, Tom Bishop Jr. (Daniela), Jacob (Haley) and daughter, Hannah (Andrew) and his daughter, Tessa (Brandt); grandchildren: Mason and Ruby Bishop, Carter Bishop and Ivy Brandt. He is also survived by his sisters: Pat, Peggy, Judy, Betty and brother, Charles (Connie); sister in-law, Karen Kezerle; brother in-law, Robert (Sally) Kezerle; numerous nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins. Lots of love from an extended family.

Tom was preceded in death by his son, William and daughter, Abbey; his parents, Donald and Bessie; brothers, William and Richard; sisters, Evelyn, Linda and in-laws, Robert and Betty Kezerle.

A visitation for Tom will be held Saturday, Feb. 25, 2023, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 202 W. Jefferson St., Morris, from 10 a.m. until time of service at 1 p.m. A luncheon will immediately follow the service at Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

An online guestbook has been made for the family, where you may sign the guestbook, share memories and photographs. You can access this by visiting the website at [www.ucdaviscallahan.com](http://www.ucdaviscallahan.com).

Arrangements have been entrusted with U.C. Davis-Callahan Funeral Home, 301 W. Washington Street, Morris.

## Immaculate Conception Church to host March 4 mystery dinner

The Immaculate Conception Church in Braidwood will be hosting a mystery dinner, "A Trip to Die For" on a 1950's themed Orient Express, on Saturday, March 4 at 6 p.m.

The passenger manifest includes a variety of rich, influential individuals from the upper classes of Europe (and possibly some spies), as well as members of the train's crew.

Everyone is expecting a luxurious train ride including dinner and drinks. However, they aren't expecting foul weather, a dastardly deed and getting involved in an international incident.

It will be held at Father White Hall, 110 S. School St. in Braidwood. You will be assigned a role as a passenger

or staff member aboard the Orient Express and will play that character for the evening. You are encouraged to come dressed as your character. There will be great food, laughs, suspense and mystery solving.

Space is limited. Advance sign ups are required, as each person will play a vital role in

solving the mystery. You must be at least 21 to participate. Character assignments will be sent out Feb. 27.

Your ticket to fun will cost \$30 which includes dinner and drinks. Deadline to grab your ticket is Feb. 26. To register online go to [icparishbraidwood.org](http://icparishbraidwood.org) or call Sara Wollags (815) 287-2036.

## Free seed giveaway with Unv of IL Saturday

Getting ready for gardening? Need seeds?

Join the University of Illinois Will County Master Gardeners, Naturalists and Composters for their annual SeedFest on Saturday, Feb. 25,

from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Will County Extension Office.

This is a family friendly free event. Each attendee may choose up to 15 packets of seeds. No registration needed!

## THANK YOU FIRST RESPONDERS



To the brave men and women who put their lives in harm's way every day! You work hard at what you do.... **Don't let anyone take that away.**

Last Will and Testaments, Trusts, Durable Power of Attorney and Health Care Power of Attorney are serious concerns that need to be addressed while you are living. Gain peace of mind knowing your affairs are in order by calling for an appointment in taking care of these important life decisions.



207 S. Water St., Wilmington • 815-476-7635

Live, in person!

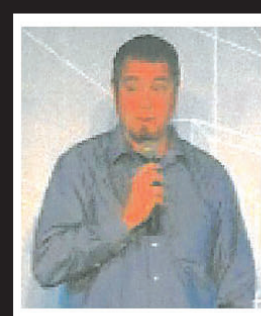
## Stand-up Comedy Show!

One night only!

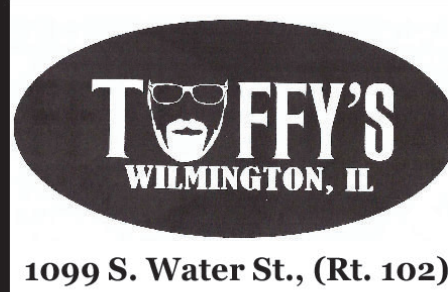
Saturday, March 3

\*Headliner\* Fritz Nothnagel

Time... 8:03pm



Featured act Mike Fountain



1099 S. Water St., (Rt. 102)

Guest Comic Ree Ledbetter



For tickets call (815) 476-2700



MC/Host Bill Brady



Presale \$15.00 (Up to 3 p.m. on 03/04/23) Door \$20.00





# The good news in Pritzker's proposed budget

After taking a pandemic-induced hiatus from proposing large, permanent base spending increases and instead using most revenue increases for one-time expenditures, Gov. JB Pritzker's recently proposed Fiscal Year 2024 state budget appears to increase base operational spending by at least \$2.75 billion, or 7.9 percent.

Annual pension payments will also rise by a relatively modest \$201 million, which ups the total base spending increase to \$2.95 billion.

The Republicans warned that Gov. Pritzker was setting the state up for a massive tax hike if revenues plummet. But Pritzker and his people repeatedly pointed out that their revenue projections actually factor in a recession later this calendar year. Their projections are, the Pritzker folks say, "conservative."

After raising the current (2023) fiscal year's revenue projections by \$1.24 billion, to \$51.36 billion, revenues are projected to fall by \$1.4 billion in the coming fiscal year.

Net individual income taxes are projected to rise in Fiscal Year 2024 by \$778 million, or about 3.3 percent. But corporate income taxes are projected to fall by \$175 million, or about 3 percent. Sales tax revenue will be relatively flat, rising by just \$25 million.

The governor's budget director said one factor in the sales tax projection is the gradual shift of sales taxes on motor fuel purchases from General Funds to the Road Fund which was negotiated when the capital bill was passed in 2019. She didn't say, but another aspect of the flat growth is likely the projected recession. Transfers in will fall by about \$1.3 billion below the current fiscal year, which the governor's budget office has been



**CAPITOL FACTS**  
Rich Miller

assuming since last year. And, even if their revenue projections are wrong, "We've cut budgets before," one Pritzker administration official said.

Even Comptroller Susana Mendoza, who spent the past couple of years warning legislators and the governor not to increase permanent spending programs, backed off, depriving Republicans and conservative pundits of a Democratic champion who they had already been using as a cudgel against Pritzker and the super-majority party.

After the governor's budget address, for example, Senate Republican Leader John Curran issued a statement saying, "We must heed the warnings of Comptroller Mendoza and be disciplined in our fiscal approach at a time when we are likely to experience a recession."

Instead, Mendoza deemed the large base spending hike as, "careful, strategic, and necessary investments."

Human services will receive the largest spending increase at \$912 million. Education, including higher education, will receive the next largest increase at \$791 million. Healthcare costs will rise by \$709 million and public safety expenditures will go up by \$224 million.

To some, particularly progressives and social service providers, the governor's proposed increase is a floor, not a ceiling. "The proposed budget's lack of investment in the home care workers who make it possible for seniors to stay in their homes may force some to forgo needed care or be forced into nursing homes," claimed an SEIU Healthcare leader.

"We now ask the General Assembly to build on this proposed budget and advance our legislation to increase the wage

rate for Direct Support Professionals by \$4 an hour to help address the workforce crisis Gov. Pritzker discussed today," said an IARF official.

The Illinois Education Association wants vision and dental insurance coverage for retirees, and several groups are pushing a \$500+ million annual state child tax credit.

The governor's people say their proposed increases are a hard ceiling. Any new funding proposals will have to come from within the proposed budget framework and forecasts. However, revenue forecasts have been known to change in the past. Often, even.

The two Democratic legislative leaders issued statements in general support of the governor's outline. The House Democrats' chief budget negotiator, Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth said she wanted to work toward a "budget that is both fiscally and socially responsible."

The governor's budget director Alexis Sturm pointed out some other good news.

"For the four years before the governor came into office, the average interest payment was about \$400 million," Sturm told reporters. "We're running nearly \$300 million, if not more, below that average now," she said.

And Ralph Martire at the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability said the revenue this fiscal year is high enough, "to create true balance at the end of FY 2023, with no accumulated deficit carrying forward into FY 2024." He also claimed that the deficit at the end of the coming fiscal year will be the lowest "in nominal, non-inflation-adjusted dollars that it has been in 25 years."

Not bad.  
Rich Miller also publishes Capitol Fax, a daily political newsletter, and CapitolFax.com.

## 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.

### Attorney Vazquez files Stewart estate notice

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE  
STATE OF ILLINOIS  
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE  
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS

In the Matter of the Estate of  
JERRY D. STEWART, deceased.  
Case No. 2023 PR 000066

#### DEATH AND PROBATE NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Jerry D. Stewart. Letters of Office were issued on February 15, 2023, to Wilma Stewart, 405 Bass Street, Wilmington, IL, 60181, as representative.

The estate will be administered without Court Supervision, unless under section 28-4 of the Probate Act of 1975 (75 ILCS 5/28-4) any interested person terminates independent administration at any time by mailing or delivering a petition to terminate to the court clerk.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of Andrea Lynn Chasteen, Circuit Court Clerk, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois, or with the representative or both on or before the 22nd of August, 2023, or if mailing or delivery of this notice form the personal representative is required under by Sec. 18.3 of the Probate Act of 1995, the date state in that notice.

Any claim not filed within that period is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Circuit Court Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney, if any, within ten (10) days after it has been filed with the court clerk.

E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit <http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp>, or talk with your local circuit clerk's office.

Wilma Stewart,  
Representative

Attorney Staci L. Vazquez  
ARDC#6339790  
Geiger, Durkee & Vazquez LLC  
Attorney for Petitioners  
415 Liberty St., Morris, IL 60450  
815-942-5072  
staci@gdv-law.com

Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, Feb. 22, March 1 and 8, 2023.

### Notice of Foreclosure of 725 E. Elmo Court

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 12TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS

GRUNDY BANK; Plaintiff, -v.- DANIEL DIETRICH, TARYA L. DIETRICH, ILLINOIS HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, UNKNOWN OWNERS, AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS; Defendants,  
Case No. 22FC1371

THE REQUISITE AFFIDAVIT FOR PUBLICATION HAVING BEEN FILED, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN YOU, UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, DEFENDANTS IN THE ABOVE-ENTITLED CAUSE, THAT THE ABOVE-ENTITLED MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE ACTION WAS FILED ON DECEMBER 27, 2022 AND IS NOW PENDING.

1. The names of all Plaintiffs and the Case Number are identified above.  
2. The Court in which this action was brought is identified above.  
3. The names of the titleholders of record are Daniel Dietrich and Tarya L. Dietrich.  
4. A legal description of the real estate sufficient to identify it with reasonable certainty is as follows:

Lot 11 in Unit 1 of Mourning Subdivision, a Subdivision of Part of the Northwest Quarter of Section 19, in Township 32 North, and in Range 9 East of the Third Principal Meridian, According to the Plat Thereof Recorded April 3, 1969 as Document No. R69-5780, in Will County, Illinois

5. A common address or description of the location of the real estate is as follows:  
Commonly known as: 725 E. Elmo Court, Godley, Illinois 60407  
Permanent Index Number: 24-19-102-002-0000

6. An identification of the Mortgage sought to be foreclosed is as follows:

a. Names of Mortgages: Daniel and Tarya L. Dietrich  
b. Name of Mortgagee: Grundy Bank  
c. Date of Mortgage: December 2, 2013  
d. Date of Recording: December 20, 2013  
e. County Where Recorded: Will  
f. Recording Document Identification: R2013142537

NOW, THEREFORE, unless you, Unknown Owners and Non-record Claimants, file your answer to the Complaint for Foreclosure in this cause or otherwise make your appearance therein, in the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson St., Joliet, IL 60432, on or before February 8, 2023, default may be entered against you and each of you at any time after that day and a Judgment for Foreclosure may be entered in accordance with the prayer of the Complaint for Foreclosure.

E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit <http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp> or contact the Clerk of this Court.

James M. Durkee - Trial Attorney  
(6296297)  
Geiger, Durkee & Vazquez LLC  
415 Liberty St.  
Morris, IL 60450  
815-942-5072  
staff@mglawoffices.com  
Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, Feb. 8, 15 and 22, 2023.

## Area gas prices remain unchanged

While the average gasoline price in Illinois fell 2.2 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.49/g, area prices remain unchanged according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Prices in Illinois are 3.8 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 21.1 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

"Motorists across many areas of the country have seen gas prices inching down for another week, while some states have moved higher. We've seen some refinery challenges in pockets of the country, while others are starting the transition to summer gaso-

line, weighing on prices. For diesel, the outlook remains bright with prices continuing to fall," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

The cheapest station in Illinois was priced at \$2.99/g while the most expensive was \$4.79/g, a difference of \$1.80/g. Locally, Braidwood stations' lowest price was \$3.49/g, in Wilmington \$3.48/g and Coal City \$3.65/g.

"Oil prices have softened over the last week, helping to limit any upside at the pump, with strong economic data leading to concern that the Fed will continue to use interest rates to slow the economy. This could weaken demand as we head into the peak summer driving season," DeHaan said.

"For diesel, the great news is that the most common price in the U.S. for diesel is now \$3.99 per gallon, with average prices continuing to drop. In the next couple of weeks, diesel will finally flip to deflationary compared to a year ago, which is excellent news for the economy."

## Chili cook-off Sunday

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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#### CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Sea grape
- 5. European public health group (abbr.)
- 9. A way to delight
- 11. Appetizers
- 13. Ancient heralds' wands
- 15. Make a booking
- 16. \_\_\_ death do us part
- 17. Pearl Jam frontman
- 19. Spider genus
- 21. Fill with high spirits
- 22. A major division of geological time
- 23. Catch
- 25. An independent ruler or chieftain
- 26. Electronic music style (abbr.)
- 27. Influential Spanish cubist painter
- 29. Illegally persuades
- 31. A way to derive
- 33. British School
- 34. Appear alongside
- 36. Surely (archaic)
- 38. Harsh cry of a crow
- 39. A day in the middle
- 41. Kansas hoops coach Bill
- 43. The longest division of geological time
- 44. The first sign of the zodiac
- 46. Appetizer
- 48. Link together in a chain
- 52. A bacterium
- 53. In a way, forces apart
- 54. Cheese dish
- 56. Combines
- 57. In an inferior way
- 58. Colors clothes
- 59. Dried-up

#### CLUES DOWN

- 1. Gastropods
- 2. Confusing
- 3. Romanian monetary unit
- 4. The rate at which something proceeds
- 5. A prosperous state of well-being
- 6. Asked for forgiveness
- 7. Makes less soft
- 8. Part of speech
- 9. Outside
- 10. Advice or counsel
- 11. Badness
- 12. Protein-rich liquids
- 14. Not moving
- 15. Call it a career
- 18. Poetry term
- 20. Not wide
- 24. Pastries
- 26. Turns away
- 28. Satisfies
- 30. Gift adornments
- 32. San Diego ballplayers
- 34. Manufacturing plant
- 35. Check or guide
- 37. Dogs do it
- 38. Chilled
- 40. Scorch
- 42. Unproductive of success
- 43. Electronic counter-countermeasures
- 45. Attack with a knife
- 47. Feel bad for
- 49. Enclosure
- 50. Assert
- 51. Geological times
- 55. Midway between east and southeast

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# Braidwood plant to get major upgrade

More jobs, more megawatts with \$800 million

Constellation, operators of the Braidwood Generating Station, will invest \$800 million in new equipment to increase the output of its Braidwood and Byron Generating Stations in Illinois by approximately 135 megawatts, enough to power the equivalent of 100,000 homes around the clock every year.

The project will require thousands of union workers during construction while expanding economic activity for surrounding businesses in the plant communities. The additional jobs come on top of the 1,200 permanent workers at the two plants.

Once the upgrades are complete the additional carbon-free power generated will be equivalent to removing 171,000 gas-powered vehicles from the road per year, or the equivalent of adding 216 intermittent wind turbines to the grid.

"These investments in our world class nuclear fleet will allow us to generate more zero-carbon energy with the same amount of fuel and land, and that's a win for the economy, the environment and Illinois families and businesses who rely on our clean energy," said Joe Dominguez, president and CEO of Constellation.

"These projects will help create family-sustaining jobs and are a direct result of state and federal poli-



Courtesy photo

**BRAIDWOOD GENERATING STATION** will install new state-of-the-art turbines that will help expand output by 135 megawatts under an \$800 million upgrade for Braidwood and Byron stations. The project over the next six years will involve thousands of union jobs and increased spending in local communities.

cies that recognize the incredible value of nuclear energy in addressing the climate crisis while keeping our grid secure and reliable."

The Braidwood and Byron projects involve replacing the main turbines at the two facilities with state-

of-the-art, high efficiency units that are expected to add approximately 135 megawatts. Constellation expects to see increased output at the stations as early as 2026, with the full updated output available by 2029. Work on the uprates will occur in stages during

scheduled refueling outages.

Braidwood and Byron were among the Illinois nuclear plants saved from premature retirement by passage of the state Climate and Equitable Jobs Act in 2021.

Since then, Congress passed the

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) last year, which provides a base level of support for nuclear energy nationwide. Both pieces of legislation have enabled renewed investment in nuclear energy.

Support for nuclear in the IRA has made extending the lives of U.S. nuclear assets to 80 years more likely assuming continued support. It has caused Constellation to examine nuclear uprate opportunities that were cancelled a decade ago due to market forces.

The 45Y tax credit for the production of new carbon-free electricity helps make these investments economic.

The Illinois uprates come on the heels of Constellation's announcement of significant progress at its clean hydrogen project at Nine Mile Point Generating Station in upstate New York, and the start of work on operating license renewals at the Clinton and Dresden nuclear plants in Illinois.

"It is gratifying to see new long-term projects at our nuclear facilities getting the green light. This is an exciting time for our industry as we continue our investment in the future of our plants," said Dave Rhoades, chief nuclear officer, Constellation.

"Our workers stand at the ready to welcome new employees for these projects as we continue building upon creative new efforts that provide additional clean energy to the communities we serve across the nation."

## The possibility of AI fighting climate change

Dear EarthTalk: How can we harness the power of AI to fight climate change?  
-- P.K., Old Forge, PA 18518

No doubt, artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to play a significant role in addressing the challenges posed by climate change.

One way that planners are already utilizing AI is for so-called predictive modeling about the potential impacts of climate change on different regions and ecosystems to help identify areas that are most vulnerable and prioritize mitigation and adaptation efforts.

AI algorithms' ability to process decades of historical weather and climate data and crunch the numbers make it far superior at predicting the future than a few humans could ever be. (But at least we still need to be here to program the AI and interpret the results.)

Another way AI is already playing a role in reducing emissions is by helping optimize energy use and other systems in buildings, transportation systems and industrial processes.



To wit, optimized manufacturing processes have led to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions at individual factories and other industrial facilities by as much as 40 percent.

Direct carbon emissions from the manufacturing sector account for almost one-quarter of all U.S. greenhouse gas output; finding ways to trim back emissions therein could mean significant reductions in our overall national carbon footprint.

The ability of AI software to continuously optimize industrial processes means that the companies that employ such technology can reap a whole host of benefits beyond greenhouse gas emissions reductions, including increased yields, reduced waste, faster design iteration and less energy consumption—all which result in lower costs and higher profits.

Meanwhile, AI is also in use to help industrial facilities still burning fossil fuels to monitor and optimize carbon capture and storage systems to make our dirtiest facilities do less damage.

AI is also optimizing our capture and storage of energy from renewable sources. Hydroelectric systems are using AI tools to optimize water levels according to seasonal needs and other factors.

Wind farms and solar arrays are employing AI systems to improve their efficiency and reliability which in turn makes them easier to scale as market demand dictates.

And yet another recent application of AI in the fight against climate change is monitoring and tracking deforestation by analysis of satellite imagery; this kind of climate surveillance can help detect and prevent illegal logging—and the loss of critical carbon sinks—in real time.

Conservation groups like Global Forest Watch, Conservation International and World Resources Institute have pioneered various uses of AI to analyze satellite and/or drone imagery to map and monitor forests "on the fly" so to speak.

While the climate crisis is more dire than ever these days, environmental advocates and others are keeping their fingers crossed that we can realize the potential power of AI to rein in emissions in time before things get outright cataclysmic.

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I am selling a 40' C-box (shipping container). The thing is completely tight with no leaks. It is in Minoaka currently. So shipping should not be too expensive. I am asking \$2,500. Call 815-666-6426.

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House for rent: 3 bedroom, 2 bath, attached garage. Cottage Rd. on Kankakee River with boat launch. \$2,200/month. Call 708-205-4826.

### LOST & FOUND

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 Please visit [http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/onthejob\\_apprenticeship.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/onthejob_apprenticeship.asp)

- All applicants must meet the following minimum requirements established by the City of Wilmington:
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  - Possess a valid state-issued driver's license with good driving record;
  - Must be a minimum of 21 years of age and UNDER 35 years of age at the time of application unless otherwise exempt by State Statute 65 ILCS 5/10-2.1-6;
  - Possess a high school diploma or G.E.D. equivalent;
  - Possess a valid NIPSTA card - OR - equivalent criteria as per the State standard, issued within 12 months of the written exam date (April 15, 2023);
    - POWER Test Cards issued by NIPSTA, Triton College or Joliet Junior College will be accepted.
  - Applicants must present the POWER Test card NO LATER than the written exam date (April 15, 2023).
  - Any applicant who would like to schedule a ride along with a Wilmington police officer may contact Sergeant Dan Brimer at 815-476-2813.
  - Successfully pass a written examination with a minimum passing score of 70% on each of the (4) sections;
  - Successfully complete an oral interview with the Board of Police Commission;
  - Successfully complete a background investigation, polygraph, and psychological testing;
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# COMET SPORTS

## Comets giving Coach Porter a final run

BY ERIC FISHER  
PUBLISHER

The Coalers needed a miracle Saturday while playing at Reed-Custer for the opening round of the regional.

And they almost got it, coming back from a 15-point deficit to close within five before the Comets held on to win it 70-61.

"Survive and advance, it's that time of year," said Reed-Custer coach Mark Porter. "That's what you want to do and we were able to do that. We played extremely well offensively, especially in the second quarter. We attacked the basket how we wanted to and gave ourselves a nice lead."

The Comets crashed the boards for 31 offensive rebounds, turning many into points as they built a 15-10 first quarter lead.

Meanwhile, the Coalers stayed within striking distance thanks to senior Carson Shepard who hustled after the ball. He got a little too aggressive, picking up his fourth foul 6:26 into the second quarter and had to come out. That's when the Comets built their lead to 15.

But Shepard returned in the third and Coal City big man Carter Garrelts sank back-to-back threes to close to within 43-38 with just over two minutes in the third.

"The plan wasn't to tie a knot at the end of a rope and then hang on. That was never the plan but it wound up being what almost happened. Give Coal City credit, they came out in the second half and started knocking down shots, started knocking down threes that they didn't knock down in the first half," Porter said.

Reed-Custer (24-6 overall) was just too tall underneath, grabbing 53 total rebounds, including 15 for senior Jake McPherson who finished with 15 points. Even more impressive Jace Christian who grabbed 11 rebounds and turned them into second-chance shots as he led with 28 points.

Lucas Foote also helped the Comets, scoring 13 points while pulling down five rebounds. Wes Shats had 11 rebounds to go along with nine points.

Collin Monroe made a three-pointer, one of five for Reed-Custer, while Josh Bohac chipped in with two points.

"We just have to react a little bit better," Porter said. "We wound up getting hurt, regained our composure, knocked down free throws, and we've been able to do that all year long. We're not the best free-throw shooting team in the world. But we've been able to knock down free throws when we need them."

For Coal City there was no head hanging as they played their hearts out until the end.

Four players finished in double figures including Garrelts with 16 points (three treys) and 13 rebounds. Shepard, who took the bench in foul trouble with only two points, returned to end up with 15. Feeney tallied a couple of treys to end up with 14 points while Owen Wren made two three-pointers to score 10 total points.

Coaler senior Chris Cholico came off the



Photo by Eric Fisher

**INCOMING!** Reed-Custer senior Jake McPherson drives to the basket to score two of his 15 points on Saturday during a 70-61 regional win over Coal City.

bench to make a pair of three-pointers to finish with six points. In all Coal City made 10 treys and shot an impressive 11-for-13 at the line.

It was the third time this season the Coalers lost to Reed-Custer and it was the closest. Their previous losses were 60-50 and 77-45. Coal City finishes its season with an 11-19 record.

Reed-Custer advances to the regional semifinal in Seneca at 7:30 p.m. tonight (Wednesday) against Bishop McNamara. Wilmington lost to Mac on Saturday 63-54.

"Our seniors have stepped up and been seniors all season and they did it again tonight. Hopefully that will continue as we make it through the playoffs because there are some tough games ahead," Porter said.

Saturday's game was bittersweet in one way...it was the last time Porter will be coaching on his home court. For 18 years he's been the head coach at RCHS and is retiring as a teacher

and coach after 39 years and more than 325 victories.

"In a way it felt like just another ball game. It's Coal City vs. Reed-Custer, a rivalry I've been lucky enough to experience several times. I've gone up against other good coaches and other good players and I feel fortunate to witness some close games."

Porter said he leaves the program believing he molded more than just basketball players.

"I want people to think that we put out some well-rounded kids. That's the biggest challenge, to make them more than just basketball players. We stressed academics first so that they can carry themselves well on the floor. When they do that they are gentlemen. We can wind up with fundamentally sound players, but at the same time, we want to teach them life lessons as a whole. I've looked at it as just being part of the job and I hope I've done that well

over the years.

Porter, a history minor, hopes he and his wife Heidi can do some traveling to experience sports history.

"I'd like to go through as many high school gyms as I can. I'd like to visit the old gyms in the state of Illinois. I enjoy the history of high school basketball. I want to go to some of those old courts I haven't been to in a long while and watch a game or two. Places like Metropolis, Taylorsville, Centralia, Quincy, Moline. Those are places that I'm looking forward to going to and watching some ball games. Good high school basketball."

Odds are he'll be watching Comet games too. "Oh, we'll still be around here. Once a Comet, always a Comet. My heart is still here in Braidwood."



Photo by Eric Fisher

**AROUND THE BIG GUY**—Comet Lucas Foote switches to his left hand while going up against Coal City center Garter Garrelts on Saturday. Foote made the basket to contribute 13 points during the victory.



Photo by Eric Fisher

**TAKE AWAY**—Comet senior Josh Bohac steals the ball from Coal City on Saturday at Reed-Custer. His team won the regional opener 70-61.



Photo by Eric Fisher

**HIGH POINT MAN**—Reed-Custer senior Jace Christian (15) scored 28 points on Saturday during the regional win over Coal City.

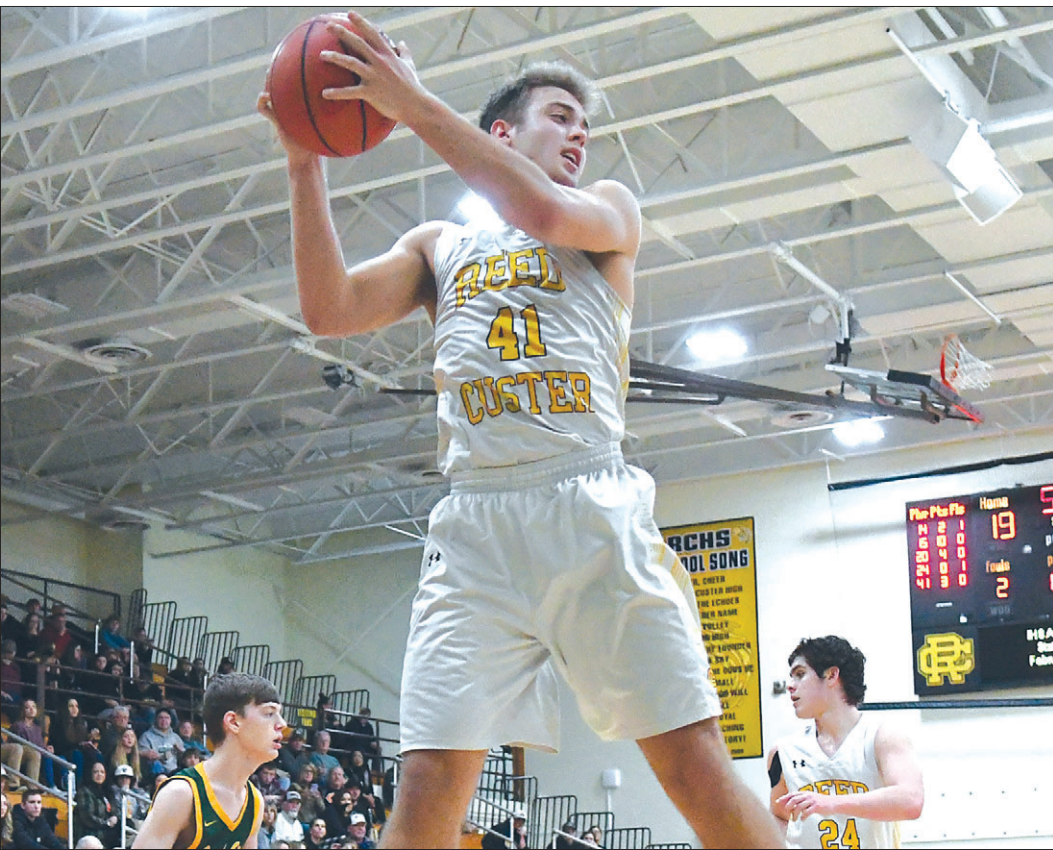


Photo by Eric Fisher

**CRASHING THE BOARDS**—Reed-Custer center Wes Shats pulls down one of his 11 rebounds on Saturday during the regional win over Coal City. The Comets had 53 rebounds total.

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Courtesy photo

PLACING THIRD in state at 220 pounds is Reed-Custer senior Kody Marschner (second from right) who won the bronze for the second year in a row on Saturday in Champaign, IL.



Courtesy photo

FOURTH IN STATE—Reed-Custer Gunnar Berg (second from left) takes the podium for fourth place at 285 pounds on Saturday in Champaign.

## Three Comets place in state wrestling

Three of five Comet wrestlers who competed in the state wrestling tournament ended up placing on Saturday.

For the second year in a row, Comet senior Kody Marschner brought home the third place medal. Senior Gunnar Berg (285) ended up in fourth place while junior Rex Pfeifer (170) placed eighth. Also competing but not placing were Comets Sam Begler (132) and Jeremy Eggleston.

Marschner (40-3) edged Beardstown's Owen O'Hara (39-3) in the third place match 3-2. It was the second time in the tournament he defeated O'Hara after facing him in the quarterfinal round and winning 5-1.

Marschner started with a 3:15 fall over Craig Markello (Robinson, 26-6) before beating O'Hara in the quarterfinal.

In the semifinal he suffered a tough 3-2 decision to Dakota's Noah Wenzel (42-3). A victory would have placed him in the championship but instead he got bumped to the consolation semi-final where he shredded Macomb's Ethan Ladd (50-8) by tech fall 24-9 in 5:58.

At 285, Berg (41-7) placed 4th after making it to the bout to decide third place against Jason Dowell (Cahokia, 42-10) who won by fall 1:52. Berg was on the same track as Marschner, winning his first two matches by falls of 3:47 over over Shaun DeVries (Dixon, 35-10) and 4:10 fall over Noah Carl (Toledo, 25-



Photo by Jeff Chumbley

REED-CUSTER's Jeremy Eggleston does his best to escape during the state finals wrestlebacks on Friday in Champaign.

9). In the semifinal - Cole Edie (Auburn, 47-3) stuck it to Berg with a 0:44 fall. That sent him to the consolation semi-final where he surprised Fairfield's Payton Allen (51-3) with a fall 1:01.

Pfeifer (45-7) placed 8th by winning his first match 14-0 major deci-

sion over Bodie Salmon (Mercer County, 27-9).

But Pfeifer lost his next match by 2:32 fall to Cahokia's Nick Deloach Jr. (42-10) then defeated Jared Herrmann (Robinson, 40-6) with a 2:28 pin. He advanced to the consolation round three were he lost 6-1 to Alex Watson (Port Byron, Riverdale, 50-8).

At 132, Comet junior Sam Begler (11-5) lost a 15-1 major decision to Holden Brazelton (S.J.-Ogden, 49-3) before getting a 20-5 victory over Logan Riggs (Roxana, 32-15).

He faced a familiar opponent in the round two wrestlebacks, Coal City's Jake Piatak (9-4) who won by 6-5 decision.

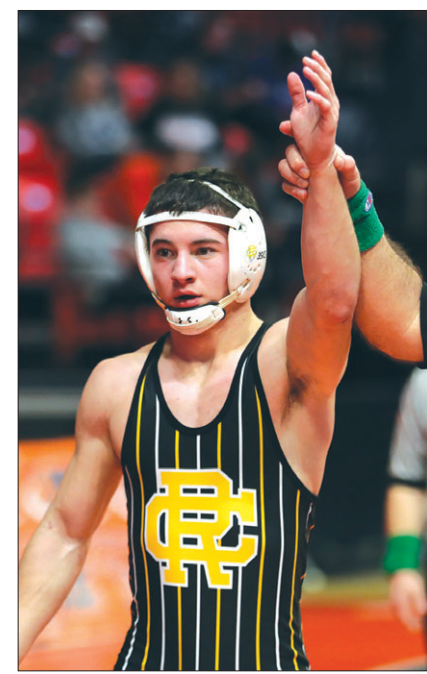


Photo by Jeff Chumbley

REED-CUSTER JUNIOR Sam Begler gets a victory hand shake after winning a 20-5 victory at 132 pounds during the state finals in Champaign.

Eggleston (38-11), a 138-pound sophomore, lost his first match to Owen Miller (Vandalia, 43-11) by a 5-3 decision. He then lost to Nick Davidson (Marian, 32-18) by a score of 4-2.

## Lady Panthers fall to Momence

The Reed-Custer Middle School 8th grade volleyball team lost against Momence, 14-25, 25-13, and 23-25.

Kirstin Klein had eight assists, two aces, and one kill. Taylor Bova had seven kills, six aces, and two blocks. Mackenzie Foote had four kills, four aces, and one block. Alyssa Wollenzien had four kills, three blocks, two digs, and one ace. Reese Brown had one ace and one dig.

They won against Limestone, 25-19 and 26-24. Taylor Bova had four kills and one ace. Kirstin Klein had six assists and one ace.

Alyssa Wollenzien had two kills, one block, two digs, and one ace. Mackenzie Foote had two aces, two digs, one block, and one kill. Reese Brown had three aces. Kayla Schott had two aces.

Kaitlyn Lantka had one kill. Great effort and hustle last night ladies.

The 7th grade volleyball team lost against Limestone last night. Sophie Moyers had 2 kills and 2 aces. Madelynn Marschner had 3 assists and 1 ace. Peyton Landgraf had 2 digs. Lastly, Olivia Barbush had 2 kills.

## Zoltani is IESA Coach of the Year

**2022 IESA STATE CHAMPS**

**2A IESA COACH OF THE YEAR**

**CAREER RECORD 123-67**

**BACK TO BACK REGIONAL CHAMPS**

**COACH ZOLTANI**

2022 STATE CHAMPION GIRLS SOFTBALL CLASS 2A

REED-CUSTER MIDDLE SCHOOL coach Lynn Zoltani was named the Illinois Elementary School Association's 2A Coach of the Year for leading her team to a 2022 state championship softball title, a first in RCMS history. They finished the season with a 17-3 record, upsetting Metamora who was 25-2 in the top of the 12th inning to win the championship 4-1. Zoltani was nominated for the award by the Illinois Coaches Association for softball and it was presented on Sunday when she said it was truly and honor to receive the award.

**MEET THE CANDIDATES**

**BRAIDWOOD CITY COUNCIL AND SCHOOL BOARD**

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**YOUR VOTE COUNTS**

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