



BRAIDWOOD JOURNAL.com

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REGIONAL CHAMPIONS!



REGIONAL CHAMPS—Reed-Custer coach Shelby Zwolinski cuts the net down at Coal City High School on Thursday after her #7 seeded Lady Comets defeated Joliet Catholic Academy 51-42 to claim the Regional Championship. It's been 19 years since the RCHS program has won a regional, now advancing to the Herscher Sectional last night (Tuesday) against #2 Watseka. If they won they will play for the sectional championship 6 p.m. Thursday in Herscher against either Bishop McNamara or Seneca.

Fall in love with a \$5 prom dress

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

It's been 15 years since Laurie Becker began coordinating Melissa's Closet & Crystal's Jewelry Box. In that time, 5,180 high school students have been transformed into Cinderella for prom night.

Instead of a fairy godmother, the prom-bound princesses have Becker, whose more than happy to play the role.

Dresses are a mere \$5 each, and shoes, jewelry, and other "sparklies" are also available.

Last Thursday, Becker took a few minutes from her frantic schedule to talk about the event.

"So far, we have over 600 dresses collected," Becker said. "Last year there were 2,872, and we expect to exceed that number (3,000 as on Monday). All 14 collection sites have turned in dresses. We have some beautiful gowns."

This year's event will be held Saturday, March 1 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Godley Park District, 500 S. Kankakee St.

Melissa and Crystal
The prom dress sale honors Melissa Michalowski and Crystal Carr. Michalowski worked at Whitmore Ace Hardware in Wilmington. Crystal Carr was her friend.

Tragically, both girls lost their lives in a car accident in 2010. Feeling compelled to honor their memory, Whitmore Ace

Hardware came up with a plan. What better way to honor two teen girls than to make a dream come true for high school students longing to attend prom.

Last year, more than 100 volunteers manning 23 dressing rooms, played a vital role in making the event a reality.

"Volunteers are the heart and soul of Melissa's Closet," Becker said. "It's so much fun, and we could never do it without their help."

Scholarship established

In 2015, the first \$10,000 scholarship was granted. Becker's goal is to increase this amount every year through the generosity of donors.

Monetary donations may be made by check to the order of Melissa's closet and mailed to 1105 S. Water St., Wilmington, IL 60481.

Spreading the word

Becker said she's looking forward to March 1, and that she looks forward to seeing the smiles on everyone's face - volunteers as well as the students who score a \$300 dress for \$5. She's proud of the way the event has grown, and feels a great sense of satisfaction in being able to bring joy to the students.

"We've put it on Facebook, and the word has spread," Becker said. "So, we don't limit dresses to students in this area. Any student is welcome. We have plenty thanks to the community."



THE BRAIDWOOD FIRE Protection District hired three full-time career firefighter paramedics. Following orientation, they will be assigned a shift. From left, Andrew Olchawa, David Tatroe, and Edward Theis.

Polar 'Plungers' halfway to \$140,000 goal

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

With the frigid winter weather, this year's Polar Plunge promises to be chockfull of goosebumps and "plungers" donning thermal undies.

Happily, the polar vortex has not discouraged the big-hearted folks who want to support Special Olympics Illinois.

So far, \$69,800 has been raised. The goal is \$140,000.

To date, the Will County Sheriff's Office has the most plungers with 40 members.

"While we're getting cold just thinking about it, we're excited to join the thousands of warm-hearted individuals who will also be taking an icy dip this winter—all in support of these incredible athletes," The team's page states.

Romeoville's Subzero Heroes are in first place for fundraising, with a cool \$5,478 committed as of last Thursday.

Michael Janovyak, Plunger Extraordinaire, raised a whopping \$1,650, or 330 percent of his goal, and Michael Caulfield has the most donors, 30 in total.

Micro-locally, the Wilmington Police Department's seven members have raised \$1,500 so far.

Top Fuel Saloon and its 12 members will take the plunge on behalf of Olympian Cameron "Hot Wheels" West, who brought home a gold and silver medal in the equestrian competition in Rockford.

The 26 members of the Coal City School District have already raised \$2,465.

The Braidwood Polar Plunge will be held Saturday, March 8 at noon at Braidwood Recreation

Club, 33915 Illinois Route 53 in Braidwood.

The Braidwood plunge is part of a statewide effort to support Special Olympics Illinois athletes.

Special Olympics Illinois offers training and competition in 18 sports for more than 55,000 athletes.

There is still time to register to plunge or support a plunger. You must raise a minimum of \$100 to earn a Polar Plunge Sweatshirt and to take the plunge.

To register, visit plungeillinois.com/register. You'll be taken to a page with a list of teams to choose from. The Braidwood Plunge is Region E. Click on "Donate" to support a team or individual plunger.



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The beginnings of Carbon Hill

Today we turn our attention to the north and west a bit to look at neighboring Carbon Hill. Officially Carbon Hill has only existed since 1892, but the mining camps of Scotch Hill, Bunker Hill and Oklahoma were there long before.

Although there was coal mining going on all over, the real history of Carbon Hill as a village started in 1884 when the Preston family heirs sold their acreage to the Star Coal Company. The Company immediately



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

opened shaft #2 north of Coal City. Potential settlers were drawn to the area of "the Hill," even before the village of Carbon Hill was platted in 1891.

On February 23, 1892 a court ordered election was held at Peter's Hotel in the proposed village to elect the first village President, Robert Fleming and the village board. The eastern boundary of the village was the railroad tracks, and the western edge was the #5 coal shaft.

The village was seven streets by four streets. Some of the lots were sold

directly to the miners, while others were used by the coal company to build rental units on. A 50 x 150 ft. lot sold for about \$100 (\$3,500 today). In the business district merchants erected their own buildings on narrow 10 x 20 ft. lots. Within a year a thriving business district was established with well populated neighborhoods surrounding it.

While some constructed their building from scratch, many people moved houses from neighboring villages of Diamond, Coal City and Braidwood on wagons pulled by horses. These small structures were entirely wood framed and unpainted. They were built to be "flexible" when the coal shaft beneath them

collapsed. The early populations of the coal towns typically did not stay long, but moved ever westward to the new coalmines of the Great Plains. But eventually a stable population blooms, and Carbon Hill was no exception. Social organizations such as the Knights of Pythias and the Modern Woodmen of America helped solidify the community. Of course, saloons were always present in the mining towns. Carbon Hill had 21 of them in 1900, serving a population of about 2,000.

1897 marked the start of yet another coal strike. The Wilmington Coal Company threatened to bring in strikebreakers as they did in the 1870's in Braidwood. This time the scabs were not "black legs" as they were previously, but Chinese, better known in that time as the Celestials.

The uproar was heard far and wide. The Chicago Record warned the companies that "Chinese coolies can live on nothing, don't need what we Americans regard as the decencies of life, and will starve out the American labor." The strike was settled in November of 1897. No Celestials were ever seen in town. Life at Carbon Hill was probably typical of most Midwestern towns, though it seems that sad stories



THE STAR #5 coalmine at the western edge of the original village of Carbon Hill.

were the rule rather than the exception. Here are two, the first taken from the Joliet Daily News. from August, 1905.

"Mrs. Bien Chetta, of Carbon Hill, committed murder and suicide last Saturday morning, near Coal City. The victim of the murder being Louis Maddelena, a young man aged 18 years, with whom it is said she had criminal relations. A revolver was the weapon used, the young man being shot near the juggler vein, the bullet ranging upward to the brain. The woman shot herself in the same way as she did her companion. In the clothing of the woman a note was found, in which she begged her husband's forgiveness and requested that her two little daughters

never be told of the tragedy of their mother's life."

The second from the Wilmington Advocate of July 1907. "So weak and emaciated that his mental powers have become undermined, John Mustar, a miner, whose home is in Carbon Hill, was taken into custody by the police at the McDonough Street Bridge Friday last. His story reveals a tragedy of hardship, brought on originally by a mine accident that forced him out of work. For a time, he lived on what he had saved and then left the mining town after his savings all was gone. Since leaving carbon Hill he had not eaten anything. His mind, while not being unbalanced, is deranged. What disposal of him will be made is not known."



A PHOTO OF Bianchetta's bar in Carbon Hill.

Fossil Ridge Library News

Adult Programs

Friday, Feb. 28- LIHEAP (Registration Required) 1-3 p.m.

This program provides financial aid to low-income households to help them meet their energy needs. IMPORTANT NOTE: Anyone who doesn't live in Will County is NOT eligible for services through LIHEAP in this area; a person must go to the agency in which county they reside.

Children Programs

Thursdays, Feb. 27 & March 6, 13, 20 & 27- Toddler Time, 10-11 a.m. We welcome toddlers and their caregivers to join us weekly to explore various toys and sensory materials.

Toddlers can enhance their gross and fine motor skills, social interaction, and language skills. Caregivers must accompany their little ones throughout the program.

Thursdays, Feb. 27- 6-7 p.m. & March 6, 13, 29, 27-5:30-6:30 p.m. Listen and Create Storytime. This program is specially designed for children aged 3-5. Children can explore new books every week and engage in a fun craft project. Please make sure to dress in clothes that can get messy, as the craft project will involve getting creative with various art materials.

Wednesdays, March 5, 12, 19 & 26 -Lap-Sit, 10-10:30 a.m. Let's instill a love

of books in children from birth to three years old. This program is designed to introduce your child to the wonderful world of books. Caregiver participation and guidance are required as we read, sing, and do finger plays.

Tuesdays, March 4 & 18- Play-doh playdates, 10:30-11 a.m. Join us for a Play-Doh workshop! Display your creativity using our Play-Doh and tools. This program is for children aged 2-6, and registration is required.

Registration is required for all programs. For more information call 815-458-2187.

RCMS names 2nd quarter top honors students

Reed-Custer Middle School is proud of students who have earned honor roll status during the 2024-25 second quarter.

High honor roll, eighth grade

Quinn Bandy, Logan Baumgartner, Maeley Bohac, Isabella Dixon, John Dixon, Sophia Dixon, Elleleanor Frieders, Tyler Hammett, Faith Hathorn, Johanna Janopoulos, Cole Kmetz, Robert Krakowski, Dylan Leonard, Mackenzie Loveland, Kennley Poole-Crites, Ava Povalish, Harper Roberts, Griffin Schmeckpeper, Avery Vanek

Honor roll, eighth grade

Adalyn Alexander, Caden Atwell, Nathan Banach, Maeley Bohac, Brandy Bragg, Collin Bryant, Johnathan Buchanan, Heidi Budick, Cali Cassem, Elliana Chavez, Samuel Crotty, Griffon Davies, April Fierro, Sophia Flowers, Mary Foley, Lucy Gruber, Addison Gurney, Kennedy Hartley, Caydon Hoover, Jordan Howell, Kamryn Hutman, Madison Knutson, Laurelai Kucera, Jakub Lichaj, Dillan Lobb, Nicholas Mallaney, Casen Mazeika, Alivia McCure, Kyla Monahan, Jayden Norris, Addison Peters, Dominic Smith, Corbin Stahl, Brett Storm, Avah Thompson, Ethan Thompson, Micah Tolstych

High honor roll, seventh grade

Charlotte Barry, Shelbie Bohac, Mollie Dockery, Lucy Esparza, Nolan Freitas, Marshall Gee, Ahna Hone, Makenna Hone, Jolene Janopoulos, Karolina Lichaj, Annalie Mendez, Brayden O'Neill, Isabella Padilla, Alli Quigley, Sarah Simonelli, Macey Steichen, Maximus Thibodeaux

Honor roll, seventh grade

Honors-Lily Anderson, Christopher

Baldo, Maya Blish, Katharine Carson, Raegan Cesena, Ollie Childers, Kayla Condreay, Mackenzie Cosgrove, Andrea Cracraft, Brooklynn Dente, Maddelynn Dienes, Kevin Earls, Alaina Edwards, Teagen Hambrick, Emma Hertz, Halas Janousek, Aiden Jones, Taylor Kroehler, Isla Las Cola, Makayla Morris, Mia Nacey, Marlene Ontiveros, Aryana Ortiz, Brody Osborne, Payton Pivonka, Riley Probus, Landon Reeb, Kaylee Scholtes, Adali Simpson, Gavin Spiese, Kassandra Theres, Brett Thompson

High honor roll, sixth grade

Yvani Berrios, Lucas Doolin, Cash Herbert, Shane Knych, Michael Krueger, Willa Meyer, Laila Morrissey, Trong Nguyen, Amelia Stephens, Alexander Thibodeaux, Lillian Trost, Paisley Wilson

Honor roll, sixth grade

Avaleigh Adams, Kinley Albin, Gabriella Arch, Landon Atwell, Emersyn Bandy, Tinley Bernico, Elle Bohac, Emmitt Bohac, Sydney Bohac, Amelia Cook, Edward Davies, Giana Drinkwine, Aaron Fierro, Joshua Forsythe, Ryker Giffin, Ryland Glass, Braxton Grayling, Makayla Hall, Maxximus Hayducak, Jack Johnson, Kaitlyn Kersmarki, Brandon Kuchar, Jaxzyn Lewakowski, Alexis Mallaney, Mathias Martinez, Tanum Michaels, Makenzie Mikalauski, Liam Monahan, Travis Perona, Connor Perveiler, Josey Pivonka, Bentley Plotts, Emily Reese, Eamon Roberts, Abel Rodriguez, Brantley Sarallo, John Savarino, McKenna Sterling, Collin Storm, Paisley Sukley, Matthew Tibble, Audrey Vanek, Bailey Vaughn, Emma Vicente, Gavin Vogler, Allison Widlacki



Photo by Kelly Van Duyne

BATTLING AT 120 pounds during the state finals in Champaign is Reed-Custer's Kaaden Wood.

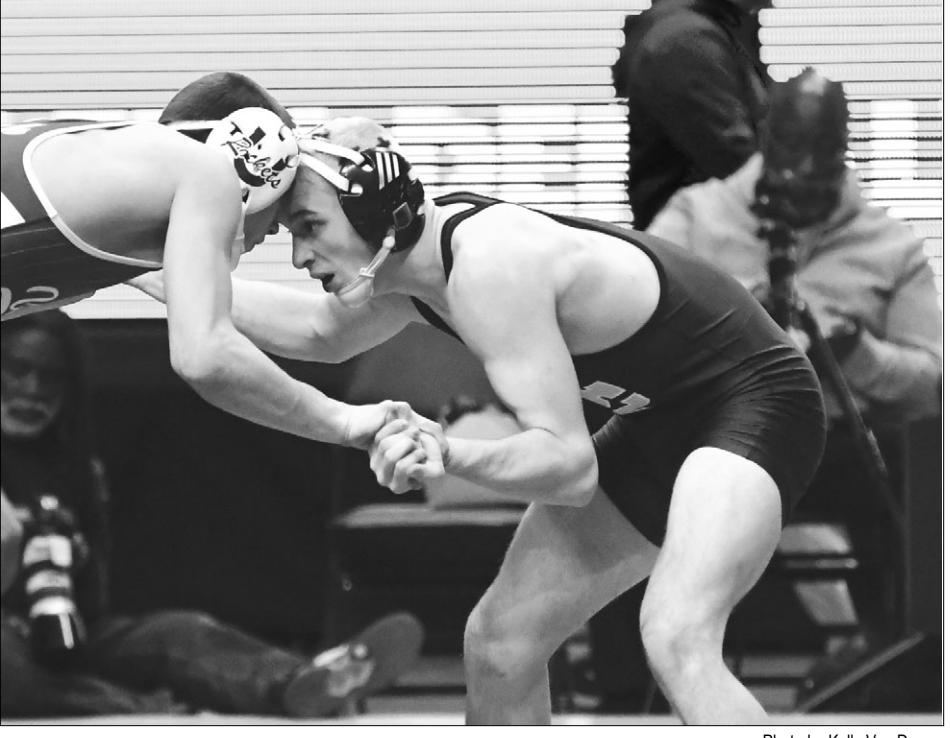


Photo by Kelly Van Duyne

COMET SENIOR Jeremy Eggleston battles at 138 pounds during the state wrestling tournament on Friday.

Pickard named to dean's list

Iowa State University announces fall 2024 Deans List. Ethan Pickard of Braidwood has been recognized for outstanding academic achievement by being named to the fall semester 2024 Dean's List. Students named to the Dean's List must earn a grade point average of at least 3.50 on a 4.00 scale while carrying a minimum of 12 credit hours of graded course work.

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Growth takes planning

BRAIDWOOD—Few Braidwood residents just don't get the common sense concept of growth. You want to enjoy low property taxes but you want all of these high price amenities. You want big community centers, big parks, lots of activities for your kids, a splash pad, top notch water treatment processing, better sidewalks all throughout town, nice paved roads, a visually attractive downtown, and more. How are all of these things paid for? By your community leaders bringing in business, commercial real estate and additional rooftops. All of this adds money to the property and sales tax base. So, unless you would be OK with a huge property tax increase, you really need to start seeing growth and commercial development for what it is, a positive necessity. Many of the same people who are complaining that our city is bringing in two dealerships, a gas station, etc. and have declared their position against business and commercial growth, are the same people complaining because the Village of Diamond is bringing in several new businesses just off of Rt. 113. Do you, or don't you want commercial development? Did you know, the nuclear power plant makes up 70% of our school district's budget? Imagine that 70% disappearing with the closure of that power plant in the future. Did you know, the nuclear power plant makes up approximately 80% of your Fire Department's budget? Imagine that 80% disappearing with the closure of that power plant. Even though the City of Braidwood does not receive any property taxes from the nuclear power plant, by them developing and bolstering an addition commercial property tax base, they are helping these other taxing bodies who benefit from the power plant to prepare for these future impacts, which are going to happen. It's not a matter of if it will happen, it's a matter of when it will happen. By burying their heads in the sand and pretending like it will never happen, residents and city leaders are setting our community up for failure in a big way. Without preparing today for the guaranteed impacts of tomorrow, every household in Braidwood will go from paying some of the lowest property taxes in the entire region, to paying some of the highest in the state.

Absent aldermen

WILMINGTON—I'd like to know how many meetings an alderman can miss before being kicked off the city council? Seems we have some who rarely attend and that's not fair to the people who voted for them. It's time this record of attendance is shared with the voters, because if they aren't showing up for meetings then they need to be replaced.

Setting them free

GRUNDY CO—Again the tired policeman puts his life in harm's way to bring in the criminals and make them all pay, but wait what do we all see, the judge comes in and sets them all free. Police are called again and again to serve and protect so they bring them back in. The citizens now unhappy they begin to shout and wail. Put them away, throw them in jail. But low and behold what do they all see the judge comes in and sets them all free.

Why he resigned

BRAIDWOOD—There have been many comments made as to why Jim (Moose) Mikel is running for public health and safety after his resigning from the same position he was elected to in 2023. Jim Mikel started seeing how the administrator and mayor were treating Todd Lyons and what they and other commissioners did to Chris Early/ It got to the point Jim couldn't work with them. It felt it was in the best interest for him and the city to resign his position. They also kept Jim out of the loop on everything especially what they were pulling to get rid of Chief Lyons. Jim was the commissioner over the police department and he was unaware of their plans to get rid of Chief Lyons. The mayor, council members and administrators were leaving Jim out of everything. That's when he decided to resign. Both chief Lyons and Commissioner Mikel worked very well together and were both working on bringing the community together and were doing a great job at it. Let's bring Jim (Moose) Mikel back as commissioner of public health and safety to continue the great work they were doing.

Gouging going on?

WILMINGTON—Why are gas prices in town and nearby surrounding areas so high? In Joliet prices are below \$3 a gallon. Time to drop the price.

Gravel please!!!

WILMINGTON—South Island Park is in need of gravel to be put into the large holes that have developed along the shoulder/ easement. Hopefully, this will be done before further erosion occurs.

Becoming dormant

COAL CITY—I was just wondering what the Mayor of Coal City is thinking. Coal City seems to be becoming dormant while everybody else around here's businesses are booming. All we get are stupid solar panels. What's next? Windmills? What happened? Diamond is booming and we are sitting in the Stone Age stage. What's going on? It took us three years to get a parking lot by BP pothole fixed. Wake up and smell the roses people.

Too many officers

BRAIDWOOD—Why does Braidwood Police Department have 16 on their payroll. After researching, I found a comment made by commissioner Ron of Public Health & Safety why we have to have 16

officers in the May 1, 2024 Braidwood Journal. He said "we need to hire Police Officers because the law requires that we have a certain number of Police Officers, and we've been short awhile." "We've cut back before and we have enough money." Also researched State Law in Illinois and there's no law mandating a specific number of police officers a municipality must have. Instead the decision on how many officers to employ is left up to each individual local government based on their population and crime rates, meaning there is no set "required" number of police officers per capita. So why do we currently have 16 officers on our force? Could you please show us the law that says the city has to have so many officers?

Back to work

SHADOW LAKES—I'm calling about the government employees that have to go back to work. Well that is just too bad. There are people here in Shadow Lakes that worked in Las Vegas and now they have to go back to work at their office not from home. The government has paid for 1,000's of square foot of empty office space and it's time these people go back to work like their suppose to. Dan Hill

Out for himself

SHADOW LAKES—If you think Elon Musk is trying to help the American people, you must be delusional. Musk is the richest man in the world. He's obsessed with money and he has a heart of stone. He knows all the tricks in the book to avoid paying taxes most of his wealth in stocks from companies that he owns when he wants to reimburse money or buy a company he will not sell his stocks so he doesn't have to pay capital gains. Instead he borrows money against his stocks, billionaires can write off up to 5% of their profits if they donate to charity. Musk has figured out a way to keep charity money to himself (look up the Musk foundation, also look up the Trump foundation.) Musk is in favor of eliminating federal taxes. That is the reason why he's cutting programs that actually helped the people. It doesn't make any sense that you are cutting programs to provide assistance to the needy and you're telling people that you're saving money who are you saving the money for if you wanna give it to the needy, why you even cut the programs in the first place? The only reason Elon Musk is interested in current federal spending so that he can get a big tax break for himself.

Both sides now

BRAIDWOOD—Once again, people on both sides of the local political spectrum continue to embarrass our community. Braidwood is being ripped apart by people supporting both candidates for Mayor. These supporters are so focused on destroying each other personally that they are dragging the entire community through their personal attacks. Social media has brought out the worst in our community by people on both sides. From several elected or appointed officials to these so-called Truth Seekers and several other residents, the issues are blatantly personal and not about what's best for our community. Local elections in this town have always been plagued by finger pointing, blame throwing, name calling and endless streams of false information from both sides, but this time it has been taken to a whole new level and everyone battling it out over our heads should be ashamed of themselves.

Friends into enemies

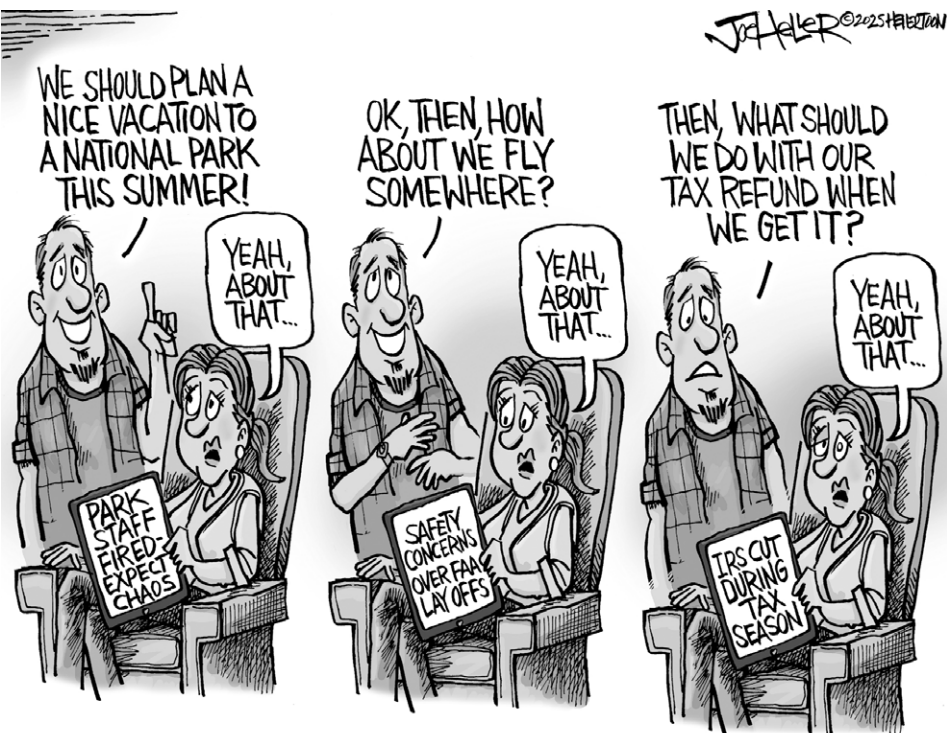
SHADOW LAKES—Look up Trump talking about social security, he says social security is corrupted and it needs to be fixed, maybe even eliminated. No doubt in my mind that as time goes on more and more Trump supporters will come to realize that they were wrong. Unfortunately, I can't say that it makes me happy that they're getting what they deserve, because all this things that Trump's administration is doing are going to impact every single American. It doesn't matter if you are a Republican or a Democrat. Trump is making friends with countries that are our sworn enemies and making enemies of countries that have always been our friends. What is wrong with this picture.

Attack on Democracy

WILMINGTON—As an elder, I've lived through many political crises in this country—but I have never seen an attack on our democracy like this. In the past, there was bipartisan opposition to lawlessness. Today, the guardrails are being dismantled before our eyes, and we must sound the alarm. This moment is not politics as usual. Some younger people may not realize just how abnormal this is. Back then, both parties opposed lawlessness whereas today, those in power are enabling it. I reject this administration and envision a different future than the one they are trying to create.

Never trust Trump

WILMINGTON—Remember the "Trump will fix it" signs before the election at his rallies? Now Trump is president but inflation is as bad as ever and predicted to get worse because Trump doesn't know how to fix inflation or perhaps he is too busy firing federal workers to be bothered with fulfilling his promises. Those who voted for Trump deserve inflation to go sky high but the rest of us who knew better than to trust Trump must suffer unfairly. Of course, Trump is not only destroying America but torching negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. Zelensky should not capitulate to Trump's deal of minerals because no one should ever trust Trump. And because Europe is in perpetual fear that Russia will attack on another front, Trump's inflammatory rhetoric could instigate another war.



Cheating our country

BRAIDWOOD—In regard to the person about 88 indictments. How did he get elected? He got elected because people knew he had those indictments but people decided that was OK we'll go ahead and elect him. Maybe they thought he wouldn't be a cheat anymore. Hmm I wonder. To the person that says Elon is not getting paid. It was on T.V. just recently that Elon is getting paid \$8 million of our money. I guess that's called not getting paid.

Cost of chapstick

ESSEX—I heard the price of chapstick has skyrocketed. Its seems that it is high due to the Republicans in Washington kissing King Trump's rump.

Signed, Dipstick

Petty but typical

Mr. Hill, I am the author of "Ignoring Constitution." You said I used democracy three times in a post. No I didn't. That post was not mine. My post came from Wilmington, not Gardner. Here is where we agree. Article 4, Section 4 says states are guaranteed a republican form of government. Nowhere in the Constitution or Declaration of Independence is the word democracy mentioned. My post mentioned all the constitutional violations Trump has committed using mainly the amendments. His latest offense is violating Amendment 1 by refusing the Associated Press access to press conferences because they refuse to accept the Gulf of America as the new name for the Gulf of Mexico. Pretty petty but typical. Maybe Congress should invoke Amendment 25 which describes who serves as President when the President is unable to perform his duties. Mental deficiencies would certainly qualify for this. The Constitution was written to prevent a monarchy from being established in the U.S. Yet look who appeared last week wearing a crown for a photo op! Hmmm? Lastly, your comment that I "do not have a clue to anything" is offensive, nasty, and mean. Calling people names is Trump's game. Is it yours, too? Clueless Guy

Beware of fake polls

BRAIDWOOD—Have you seen the town halls in Georgia, Wisconsin and Oregon where angry crowds voice their opinions about Trump and Musk? Even Trump held a town hall and he mentioned that "we," meaning he, has done polls and according to those polls Americans approve of what he has done. Bingo. I have noticed that positive polls on TV on Trump have not been identified and I wondered about the source of those polls. Therefore I looked up 'Ipsos' poll results which revealed that Trump has only a 32% approval on inflation. In other words, don't believe polls unless they are appropriately identified.

Governor's speech

GARDNER—I don't always agree with our Governor, but his speech was spot on the other day. This is just a portion to think about. The government can always do better, but destroying it is not acceptable. This is from his speech. "After we've discriminated against, deported or disparaged all the immigrants and the gay and lesbian and transgender people, the developmentally disabled, the women and the minorities – once we've ostracized our neighbors and betrayed our friends – After that, when the problems we started with are still there staring us in the face – what comes next? All the atrocities of human history lurk in the answer to that question. And if we don't want to repeat history – then for God's sake in this moment we better be strong enough to learn from it. My oath is to the Constitution of our state and of our country. We don't have kings in America – and I don't intend to bend the knee to one. I am not speaking up in service to my ambitions – but in deference to my obligations. If you think I'm overreacting and sounding the alarm too soon, consider this: It took the Nazis one month, three weeks, two days, eight hours and 40 minutes to dismantle a constitutional republic. All I'm saying is when the five-alarm fire starts to burn, every good person better be ready to man a post with a bucket of water if you want to stop it from raging out of control. Tyranny requires your fear and your silence and your compliance. Democracy requires your courage. So, gather your justice and humanity, Illinois, and do not let the tragic spirit of despair overcome us when our country needs us

the most." Finally, no one voted for Musk and he has no business in "our" business.

The king makes mistakes

WILMINGTON—Two cases of fired workers: Nuclear security experts who are needed and had to be called back and couldn't be found; employees who worked on bird flu vaccines and hopefully can be found. Irene

More tax and spend

WILMINGTON—Governor Pritzker appeared before a joint session of the House and Senate on Wednesday to deliver his 2025 State of State Address and outline his budget priorities for the coming fiscal year. I wish he would have spent less time on national issues and more time on matters directly affecting the state of Illinois. The state has a budget deficit of hundreds of millions of dollars, but the Governor actually proposed to add another \$2 billion dollars in spending. He proposes to spend more than a hundred million dollars on health benefits for undocumented immigrants. He plans to pay for it all with hundreds of millions in new taxes, transfers and gimmicks. We need to act to reduce property taxes and to reform the estate tax system to save family businesses and family farms. We need to improve our business climate and create jobs. The last few weeks have driven home the need for ethics reform. And we must improve education to create a brighter future for the next generation. All of these are things we should have heard much more about. But the Governor spent his time on national issues, and proposing more taxing and spending.

Copy Cat

BRAIDWOOD—Finding it very amusing that someone has now started a Copy Cat Facebook to the Braidwood Truthseekers. Bet money on it that a city employee is the one behind it. He needs to be next on the list of those who need to be removed from their position. One of their first posts on it is trying to bash Candidate Liz Dixon for her list of ideas. This list was actually created by the residents who interacted with a post she herself had created. It is nice to see a candidate interacting with the residents and coming up with a list for a better Braidwood. There is no need for them to dissect it and tear it down.

Building permits

BRAIDWOOD—Now it has come to light that there are more underpaid building permit in this town. How did this current city council not look into these? Are you aware this and has been happening how building permits are charged? Why are they not following the building codes for permit fees? Will those who were charged more than \$200 be receiving a refund?

Town hall meeting

WILMINGTON—I would like to thank Mayor Dietz for a great town hall meeting. It was very informative. A lot of questions were asked and they were all answered. It was very enlightening. We have over \$8 million in grants coming. How impressive. He said if anyone missed it he's going to put it on his web page and city page. I'm just glad he put it on social media.

TDS

WILMINGTON—A recent caller accused soundoff contributor Irene of suffering with Trump derangement syndrome. In actuality Irene submits some of the most thoughtful fact based soundoffs but what when the right has no facts they resort to derision and projection. If anyone suffers from Trump derangement syndrome it is the people who voted for Trump. You have to be crazy to think he is going to do anything to make your life better. Since he took office the price of eggs and gasoline have gone up. Inflation is going up and unemployment is on the rise due to Trump and President Musk firing federal employees. Since Trump took office airplanes are falling out of the sky and transportation secretary Shawn Duffy has no experience to solve any problems with the FAA. One must remember that Trump's own experience is that of a game show host who liked to fire people. He is a convicted felon and adjudicated sexual predator who is using his office to stay out of jail. Rather than putting the needs of the country first Trump and his MAGA zealots are consumed with owning the Libs. Maybe you Trumpees should pray for yourselves.

Penny Lane

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Ethics reform not a priority in Illinois

Illinois House Speaker Chris Welch didn't sound all that enthused about passing any new ethics reforms during an interview last week.

In the wake of former House Speaker Michael Madigan's conviction on 10 felony counts earlier this month, I asked Speaker Welch if he believed Madigan's conviction called out for new reform laws.



Rich Miller

"I didn't get a chance to listen to what every juror who has spoken said, but they looked at the evidence in that case, and they weighed the evidence in that case. And I think I heard one juror say that he didn't have anything negative to say about Springfield per se. But when they looked at the evidence in that case, they came to the verdict that they came to," Welch said.

That doesn't sound like he believes there's a clarion call for change.

"Are there things that we can do better in Springfield?" Welch asked rhetorically. "Probably are some things that we can do better. I think we need to talk to our members and find out what they think. I

think we need to talk to advocates and hear what advocates think."

Welch said he was "proud" that nobody in his caucus had been accused of corruption since he took over. "We addressed ethics in my first year as Speaker. There's a number of things that we have done that I think really changed the environment and have helped us get to the point that we're at today."

Madigan said much the same thing about his caucus after Rod Blagojevich was impeached and removed. It didn't work out so well. Not saying Welch is a problem, but one never knows what individual caucus members are up to.

Gov. JB Pritzker was clearly angry at Speaker Welch during the January lame duck legislative session when the governor's attempt to pass a bill to regulate intoxicating hemp blew up in his face and Welch refused to call the bill, claiming that the governor didn't have 60 Democratic votes.

Pritzker insisted at the time that he did have the votes and also demanded apologies from House Democrats who yelled

insults at members of his administration during a private caucus meeting. Pritzker has since backed off. I asked Welch if things were patched up between them and how that happened.

"First of all, there was nothing to patch up," Welch declared. "The governor was doing his job, I did my job. The governor and I talk all the time. We talked before lame duck. We've talked since lame duck. The governor is an important partner of mine. We've gotten big things done in the state of Illinois by working together. From time to time we may disagree on something, but know this, my position is always going to be based on what my caucus's position is, and I make that clear with the governor or whoever I'm talking to."

In other words, Welch is gonna stand with his caucus against any outsider, and people, including the governor, need to accept it.

Earlier this month, the House moved three resolutions to the floor that sharply criticized President Trump. The Republicans eventually stormed off the floor in response. My associate Isabel Miller asked Speaker Welch if he might be bringing more such resolutions up for a vote.

"I don't want to talk about our strategy for governing the chamber during

the 104th," Welch said. "But let me say this: I think that it is extremely important that we give our members space to vocalize what this administration's actions are doing to the people of this state and to the people around this country."

"I think the President's actions, his administration's actions, are directly impacting the people we serve. And we're going to see as we work to assemble a budget that the administration's actions are directly impacting our ability to run a responsible state. And so we can't tell you what Donald Trump going to do, but we're also not going to sit silently while he unilaterally pushes policies that hurt the people that we represent. And if we have to go to the floor and shine a light on those things, we will, because this is not a time to be silent."

Asked if the debates were effective, Welch said, "I think that they have been extremely effective. I think if you talk to our members and what they're hearing from their constituents back home, particularly the members who actually spoke on the floor, they will tell you what they're hearing from their constituents back home."

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

Gas prices stagnant, expected to rise during 'March madness'

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have fallen 2.5 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.22/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois. Prices in Illinois are 2.8 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 24.9 cents per gallon lower than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has increased 1.6 cents in the last week and stands at \$3.648 per gallon.

In Wilmington, Mohsen is charging \$2.99/g - the only area gas station with prices below \$3/g - up to \$3.18/g at Circle K.

Braidwood stations are all at \$3.19/g, and Coal City's offerings are all \$3.07/g.

In Morris, prices range from \$3.14/g to \$3.29/g at Shell. Bourbonnais prices range from \$3.03/g at Gulf and \$3.19/g at Circle K.

"With the sharp gas price increases on the West Coast now fading, the national average has dipped slightly over the

past week. While some areas are seeing increases, others are experiencing stability or even slight declines, as the bulk of the seasonal transition has yet to significantly impact gasoline prices—certainly good news for motorists," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"Oil prices have remained steady in the low \$70s, but we continue to monitor key developments, including ongoing talks between the U.S., Russia, and Ukraine on a potential agreement. However, as we inch closer to March, the typical March madness will eventually take hold, so motorists may want to enjoy the slight decline while it lasts. While I don't see an abrupt spike in the national average just yet, we're likely to see upward movement in the weeks ahead."

The lowest price in the state Monday was \$2.77/g while the highest was \$4.49/g, a difference of \$1.72/g.

The lowest price in the state Monday was \$2.77/g while the highest was \$4.49/g, a difference of \$1.72/g.

Scrap-A-Thon planned April 5 at Braidwood church

The Braidwood Presbyterian Women will be holding a Spring Scrap-A-Thon on Saturday, April 5, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church 106 S. Lincoln St. in Braidwood.

For just \$40 you can have a fun filled day of scrap- ping, door prizes, raffles and food.

To reserve a spot call or text Elizabeth Bell at 1-405- 820-5944.

Spread the word to friends and family about this event.

CC Methodist to host blood drive

Coal City United Methodist Church, located at 6805 E. McArdle Rd., Coal City, will host a Community Blood Drive in conjunction with Versiti Blood Center on Tuesday, March 4 from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

If you would like to donate blood, please contact Karen Hart at 708-217-5808 to schedule your preferred time or you may register online at versiti.org/il.

Walk-ins are also welcome, but appointments are recommended. Please bring a photo ID, eat a good meal, and be sure to drink plenty of water before donating. Please consider giving blood, one pint of blood can save up to 3 lives.

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Increased shrub and tree planting efforts contribute to uptick in major wildfires

Dear EarthTalk: Are increased shrub and tree plantings in the eastern U.S. in recent decades partially responsible for the recent uptick in wildfires across the region?
- M. Major, New York, NY



WILDFIRES ARE becoming more and more common in the Eastern U.S., and researchers are still trying to figure out exactly how and why.

Wildfires are uncontrolled destructive fires that spread over natural areas, like forests or brush. They can happen for many reasons, natural or manmade. Climate change has made wildfires increasingly more destructive throughout the world. One study from the University of Maryland suggests that current wildfires burn nearly six million more hectares of tree cover per year compared to wildfires from 2001.

The eastern U.S. is no exception to this devastation, with certain regions' wildfire frequencies having grown tenfold in the last 40 years. There are many

explanations for this, but one example is flammable resin being applied to forests by timber companies.

It is also theorized that increased shrub and tree planting efforts across the eastern United States are contributing to this uptick in major wildfires.

Researchers believe that these factors combine to explain increased wildfire odds. Per a recent study led by University of Florida researcher Victoria Donovan, in the east a one percent increase in woody cover leads to a 3.9 percent increase in odds of a wildfire the next year.

Some recent studies have noted that the planting of invasive species can also increase wildfire frequency. UMass Amherst researchers noted that wildfire occurrences have increased by up to 230 percent because of eight species of nonnative grass.

There are many ways that the average person can help combat wildfires. According to Donovan, reducing fuel usage is the easiest way to prevent wildfires. Supporting climate laws is also vital in achieving environmental justice. Signing the petition led by the Center for Biological Diversity urging FEMA to

declare both extreme heat and wildfire smoke as major disasters will support such laws.

Despite research exhibiting a correlation between woody cover and wildfire odds, shrub and tree planting efforts are not in vain. One study published in Geophysical Research Letters noted that the temperature across the east actually dropped by 0.5 degrees F over the last century. "Some vegetation in those really harsh sites might actually facilitate tree establishment by providing shade," reports University of California, Davis researcher Derek Young.

Compared to the whole nation, which actually warmed by 1.2 degrees F over the last century, this compelling evidence suggests that the current planting of trees across the east is a step in the right direction in combating global warming. However, officials also encourage thinning out forests and increasing planting of native vegetation to help prevent more wildfire risk.

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

State halts poultry sales at meets

The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) has issued a 30-day suspension on the exhibition or sale of poultry at swap meets, exhibitions, flea markets, and auction markets in response to the ongoing threat of H5N1 avian flu.

The move is intended to reduce and prevent the spread of the disease, which has been detected in commercial and backyard flocks in Illinois.

"Prevention is our most effective tool to mitigate the spread of avian flu. By being proactive in biosecurity and limiting poultry movement and exposure, we are protecting the public as well as the poultry industry," said Dr. Mark Ernst, IDOA State Veterinarian.

Avian flu is caused by an influenza type A virus which can infect poultry (such as chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, domestic ducks, geese, and guinea fowl) and wild birds (especially waterfowl).

Avian flu virus strains are extremely infectious, often fatal to chickens, and can spread rapidly from flock to flock.

Poultry flock owners, managers, and veterinarians should report any unusual findings in domestic poultry, such as increase in mortality, decrease in water consumption, decrease in egg production, or respiratory signs, including coughing and sneezing, immediately to IDOA at 217-782-4944 or the United States Department of Agriculture at 866-536-

7593.

Do not handle or attempt to capture wild waterfowl or other birds displaying signs of illness. Due to risk of infection to other animals, dogs, cats and other pets should be kept away from the carcasses of birds that may have died from avian flu.

While avian flu has also been detected in dairy cattle, no cases have been confirmed in Illinois to date. Cattle generally have much lower mortality rates than poultry and usually recover from the disease.

For more information regarding avian flu, visit the USDA site at aphis.usda.gov/live-stock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections

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OBITUARIES

George P. Archibald

GREENDALE, WI—George P. Archibald, 88, of Greendale, WI, passed away Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025 in Greendale. He was a Will County resident for 35 years and was in the Milwaukee area for 54 years.

George was born March 30, 1936 on the Route 66 farm of his grandparents near Elwood to his parents, Ivan Raymond and Alice Ann (nee Lacey) Archibald. He was a farmer and airplane pilot and was a member of St. Rose of Wilmington, St. Jude of New Lenox and Habitat for Humanity. The expansion of the Joliet arsenal before World War II forced the family to relocate to farms in New Lenox, IL. He farmed full-time with his father raising Angus cattle, corn and soybeans. He graduated from St. Joseph College of Rennselaer, IN, then from Purdue University of West Lafayette, IN.

Gene Gear of New Lenox turned part of his farm into a grass strip airport, next to the main Archibald cattle farm. George traded engine repairs in exchange for Gene offering flight instruction. George earned his private pilot license and advanced certificates, including his ground school and flight instructor ratings, keeping in touch with former flight students for many years.

In a favorite family story, Jeanette Greenley, wife of retired Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Treasurer Maxmillian Greenley, both of New Lenox matchmade their niece, the former Julianne Z. Greenley of Wilmette, IL with George and they married four months later. George left full-time farming for a



flight career, flying charter airplanes out of East Troy, WI. On Father's Day 1977, he began flying with the aircraft team for Briggs & Stratton Corp. at Mitchell Field of Milwaukee, WI. He worked full-time for Briggs & Stratton until age 74 and as a reserve pilot until age 79. He enjoyed visiting family land near Wilmington in retirement. He was a lifelong Bears and Cubs fan.

Survivors include his wife, Julianne G. Archibald, of Greendale; three sons: John J. Archibald, of Benton, AR; Michael P. (Ann) Archibald, of Brookfield, WI and David D. (Jennifer) Archibald, of Arlington Heights, IL and two daughters, Karen M. (Peter) Parks, of Brookfield, WI and Katherine "Kate" A. (Matthew) Althoff, of Sioux Falls, SD; one sister, Carol A. (Joe) Deck, of Williamsville, NY; 20 grandchildren; several cousins, nieces, nephews and their families.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Ivan Raymond and Alice Ann (nee Lacey) Archibald and his sister, Rosemary (Archibald) Goss.

Visitation will be Wednesday, Feb. 26, at Rozga Funeral Home, 703 W. Lincoln Ave., Milwaukee, WI. A Mass of the Resurrection will be held Thursday, Feb. 27, at the Basilica of St. Josaphat in Milwaukee. The family will have a private burial.

Memorials to Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity, Basilica of St. Josaphat and Pro-Life Wisconsin would be appreciated.

For more information go to www.rozgafuneral.com.

Beverly Bryant

MAZON—Beverly Bryant (Nee Swanson), 76, of Mazon, passed away Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025 at the Lightways Hospice Home in Joliet.

Born March 8, 1948 in Streator, IL, Beverly Jean was a daughter of Helmar and Mary Ellen (Girard) Swanson. She was raised on the family farm in rural Kinsman, IL, and graduated from Seneca High School with the class of 1966.

Beverly worked for over 15 years in Mazon, both as a hairstylist at Helen's Hair Salon and as a waitress at the Feed Bag Restaurant. She later gained employment with Morris Hospital for 17 years as a friendly face delivering meals to patients in their rooms. Beverly had quite the green thumb, often growing house plants and tomato and green pepper plants, as well as her outdoor flowers she tended for many years. She was an avid Chicago Cubs and Chicago Bears fan and loved a good John Wayne movie. Beverly enjoyed going with her sister to try their luck at the Riverboat Casinos, but with her family is where she was happiest. She raised three children and was blessed with several grandchildren and great-grandchildren who she loved dearly.

Survivors include three sons: Terry (Margo) Oxendine, of Verona; Tony (Shelley) Cryder, of Seneca and Larry Cryder Jr. (Jessica Juracich), of Chicago; eight grandchildren: Justin Cryder (fiancé: Brittany), Mackenzie Cryder, Gage Cryder, Keaton Cryder, Nickole (Derick) Cawley,



Dylan (Tayler) Oxendine, Alex Valentine, and Scott Valentine; six great-grandchildren: Mia, Isabella, Lila, Griffin, Tatum, and DeeDee; five nieces and nephews: Deanne Sereno, Darcy Herzog, Todd (Rachael) Babcock, Aaron Swanson, and Rachel Harson; and several cousins.

Beverly was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, Tom Bryant, on April 25, 2002; one brother, Ron Swanson; one sister, Lorraine (Verne) Babcock, and one niece, Dawn Baker.

The family wishes to extend their deepest gratitude to the neighbors and friends that assisted them with Beverly's care, especially Tina Brookman.

Per Beverly's wishes, her body has been donated to science for medical study.

The family will receive friends for a Celebration of Life at Reeves Funeral Home, 408 E. Washington Street, in Morris on Friday, Feb. 28, 2025 between the hours of 4. and 7 p.m.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Beverly's memory to Lightways Hospice.

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

Memorial services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves, Fruland, and Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory in Morris.

Kristine Lopez

WILMINGTON—Kristine Lopez, 72, of Wilmington, and formerly of Burbank, IL, passed away unexpectedly on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025, at her home.

Born Jan. 6, 1953, in Chicago, Kristine Catherine was a daughter of Charles and June (King) Swanson. She was raised in Burbank and graduated from Reavis High School.

Kristine dedicated over two decades of her career as a machine operator with BorgWarner before retiring. Outside of work, she found joy in the great outdoors, whether it was racing canoes, casting a fishing line, or simply taking in the beauty of nature. However, nothing brought her more happiness than her beloved grandchildren, who were the light of her life.

Kristine will be remembered for her kind and gentle spirit, her unwavering positivity, and her ability to find goodness in everyone she met. She was a sweet soul who never spoke a harsh word and left a lasting impression on those fortunate enough to know her.

Her memory will live on in the hearts of her family and friends, who will forever



cherish the love and warmth she shared.

Survivors include her daughter, Lisa Romano, of Wilmington; four grandsons: Derrick Romano, Anthony Romano, Jacob Romano and Nathaniel Romano; one sister, Bonnie Miller; one brother, Chuck Swanson and nieces and nephews: Shelley, Chris, Kailie and Charlie.

Kristine was preceded in death by her parents; one son, Martin Peterson and one sister, Cyndi Swanson.

Cremation rites have been accorded. The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation and celebration of Kristine's life at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Road in Wilmington on March 22, 2025 between the hours of 1 and 5 p.m.

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

Cremation and memorial arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves, Fruland and Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory.

Kenneth Gill

BELLWOOD, IL—Kenneth Chris Gill, 68, of Bellwood, IL, passed away Monday, Feb. 10, 2025 at the Bellwood Developmental Center.

Born on July 13, 1956, in Cullman, AL, Kenneth was the beloved son of Cora Margaret (Grissom) Gill and the late Howard Kenneth Gill. He was raised in Chicago in a loving home and held strong to his Baptist faith. In his leisure time, Kenny found joy in running and music, especially the soothing melodies of LeAnn Rimes. His family, including his parents and grandparents, held a special place in his heart, and he treasured the close bonds they shared.

Survivors include his mother, Cora Margaret, of Cullman; three brothers: Johnny Ray Gill, Paul Joseph Gill and Charles Vance Gill; nieces and nephews: Trista Gill, Matthew Gill and Christopher Gill; aunt, Elcia (Gill) Vanness; uncle, Ellis Vanness, and cousins: Sandra Gill, Gerald

Gill, Anthony Gill, Barb McKenzie, Betty Vanness and Donna Vanness.

Kenny was preceded in death by his father and three uncles: Harvey Gill, Ray Gill and Vernon Gill.

Cremation rites have been accorded and a memorial service will be held at Island City Baptist Church, 120 Vine St. in Wilmington on Saturday, March 1, 2025 at 10 a.m. Pastor Jeff Logsdon will officiate.

Kenny will be laid to rest in Cullman, AL.

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

Cremation services and memorial arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves, Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory in Wilmington.

Eugene P. Bianchetta



COAL CITY—Eugene P. "Gino" Bianchetta, 83, of Coal City, passed away on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025 at Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, due to injuries sustained in a car accident.

He was born on May 8, 1941 in Morris to Louis and Pauline (nee Sikora) Bianchetta. Gino grew up in the Coal City area and graduated from Coal City High School. He served his country honorably for four years in the United States Navy. Gino married Naomi J. Swanson at the Coal City Assumption Church on Nov. 12, 1966. Together they raised their three children. He started his working career as a Coal City mailman, then switched to the better job of working for the Army Corps of Engineers as a lock and dam operator until his retirement.

Gino was a member of the Coal City Restaurant morning coffee crew. He liked to dabble in many activities over the years, including bee keeping and working with antique tractors and steam engines. He was interested in his Italian heritage and enjoyed learning about it through genealogy. He was a member of the American Italian Cultural Society and he loved going up every month to help cook and drink wine on "Spaghetti Day." Gino and Naomi hardly missed a Saturday night going out



to eat with Sharon and Jim Aldridge. They also enjoyed taking trips to Shipshewana with Mike and Linda Ahern. Most of all, Gino was proud of his children and grandchildren and was affectionately known as "Grumpy Grandpa."

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Naomi Bianchetta; his children: Gina (Vince) Piatak, Laura (Andrew) Symons and Peter (Jaimie) Bianchetta; his grandchildren: Joseph Piatak, Jacob Piatak, Jason Piatak, Reese Symons, Lila Symons and Madison Holcomb; his sister, Paula (Dave) Hamm; his brothers, Donald (Pat) Bianchetta and Robert (Laurie) Bianchetta. Also surviving are several nieces and nephews.

Visitation will be from 2-6 p.m. on Sunday, March 2, 2025 at Ferrari Funeral Services, 1044 Ferrari Dr., Coal City.

Funeral Service will be at 9 a.m. on Monday, March 3, 2025 at the Coal City United Methodist Church, 6805 E. McArdle Rd. in Coal City. Rev. Dr. Jay Regennitter will officiate.

Burial will follow at Braceville Gardner Cemetery.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guestbook at www.ferrari-funeral.com.

Ferrari Funeral Services of Coal City are entrusted with arrangements.

William C. Griffith

WILMINGTON—William C. Griffith, 84, of Wilmington, passed away Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025 in New Lenox.

Born on May 2, 1940, in Harvey, IL, William Clancy was a son of Clancy William Griffith and Elizabeth (nee Doogan) Workman.

A proud retired teamster, William spent a significant portion of his life working hard to support his family and build a bright future for them. He resided in Wilmington for 18 years and was a member of Will County Sportsman's Club, Lake Will, where he found immense joy in boating and embracing the lake life.

Survivors include five children; five



grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

Cremation rites have been accorded, and a celebration of William's life will be held at a later date.

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

Cremation services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves, Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory in Wilmington.

Patricia McLuckie

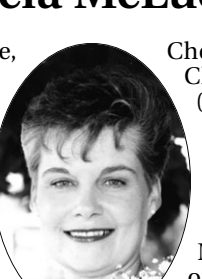
COAL CITY—Patricia McLuckie, 83, of Coal City, passed away peacefully on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025 at Ascension Mercy Medical Center in Aurora with her daughter by her side.

Born Oct. 21, 1941, in Chicago, Patricia Irene was the daughter of Robert Henry and Jewell Beatrice (Austin) Igel. She was raised in Chicago, where she completed her education and graduated from high school. Patricia built a dedicated career in secretarial services and retired from Diageo North America, formerly Gordon Spirits.

A woman of Catholic faith, Pat found joy in reading and was known for her warm and gentle nature. Never one to speak ill of others, she had an incredible gift for seeing the good in everyone she met. Patricia's kindness, compassion, and unwavering positivity will be dearly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing her.

Above all, family and her grandchildren were such a cherished part of Pat's life. She leaves behind a legacy of grace, love, and quiet strength that will be cherished forever by all her family and friends.

Survivors include her husband, John who she married May 21, 1991; daughter,



Cheryl (Mark) Johnson of St. Charles, IL; step-son, John M. (Lisa) McLuckie, of Wilmington; grandchildren: Ashley (Ben), Kayla (Ethan), Kristen (Tyler), Sierra, Logan, John James "J.J." and Adam; two great-grandchildren: Hudson and Leo; her sister, Michelle "Mike" Lundberg, and one brother-in-law, Dale (Shirley) McLuckie.

Pat was preceded in death by her parents.

A memorial visitation will be held at Reeves Funeral Home, 75 N. Broadway, one block north of Illinois Route 113 in Coal City on Thursday, Feb. 27, 2025 from 9 a.m. until time of memorial service, 11 a.m.

Pat will be privately laid to rest in Braceville-Gardner Cemetery at a later date.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.ReevesFuneral.com to sign the guestbook, upload photographs and share Pat's memorial page online through social media.

Cremation and memorial services have been made under the direction and care of Reeves, Fruland and Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory.

Patricia Wise

WILMINGTON—Patricia Ann Wise, 80, of Wilmington, passed away Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025 following surgery at Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, FL.

Born on Jan. 29, 1945, in Oak Ridge, TN, Patricia was the daughter of William and Hilda (Hayes) Nunley. She spent her early years in Tennessee before moving with her family to Illinois, where she continued her education and graduated from Wilmington High School with the class of 1963. Shortly thereafter, Pat started her 38 years of service with the Federal Government working at the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant and as a claims representative for the Social Security Administration.

Pat was known for her impeccable style and love of shopping, always carrying herself with grace and care. She found joy in tending to her garden, getting lost in a good book, and spending time splitting a meal with her husband. She valued the bonds of friendship, cherishing time spent with lifelong friends from school and work. A woman of faith, Pat was a devoted member of the First United Methodist Church of Wilmington, where she and her husband attended regularly.

Above all, Pat's greatest love was her family. Her grandchildren were the light of her life, and she treasured every moment with them. Her beloved puppy, Katy, was a constant companion, bringing her joy and comfort. Pat's warmth, kindness, and unwavering devotion to those she loved will be deeply missed but forever cherished by those who had the privilege of knowing her.

She is survived and greatly missed by her loving husband, Ken, whom she married June 16, 2001; two children, Tracey Brownlee and Mickey (Sheri) Hannum; step-children: Sarah (Ed) Armbruster, Tammy (Brian) Cook, Mary (John) Tahlir,



Amy Wise, Paul Morris, and Mark Morris; grandchildren: Brian Carey, Emily Hannum, Joey Hannum, Adam Brownlee, Taylor Cook, Jarrett Cook, Samantha Armbruster, Henry Tahlir; great-grandchildren: Tyler Brown, Serena Carey; one sister, Faye (the late Rayburn); one brother, Leslie (Sandra) Nunley; one sister-in-law, Lindy Nunley; several cousins, and numerous nieces and nephews, as well as many special life-long friends, former co-workers, and neighbors both in Illinois and Florida.

Pat was preceded in death by her parents; brother, William Robert Nunley; sister, Felicia (Tom) Alberico; sister, Marie Strickland and grandson, Justin Hannum.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Road in Wilmington, on March 1, 2025 from 9:30 a.m. until the time of funeral service at 12 p.m. Rev. Harriette Cross from the First United Methodist Church in Wilmington will officiate. Those wishing to participate in the services virtually are welcome to join the live-stream or watch on-demand through the link available on Pat's memorial page.

Burial will be in Oakwood, Cemetery, Wilmington, where Pat will be laid to rest near her sister, Felicia.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Pat's memory to the First United Methodist Church, or the American Stroke Association.

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

Funeral services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves, Fruland and Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory.

JJC backs Pritzker's plan for 4-year degrees

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker introduced a plan during the annual State of the State address last week that would allow community colleges in Illinois to offer baccalaureate degrees.

This initiative addresses Illinois' growing workforce needs and would continue Joliet Junior College's mission of innovation and workforce development.

"JJC is proud to support a more unified education system in Illinois — one that keeps students learning, working and building their futures right here in our state," said Dr. Clyne Namuo, JJC president.

"By expanding access to bachelor's degrees through CCB programs, we are not only bridging critical education gaps but also strengthening our workforce and communities. When students can earn their degrees close to home, they are more likely to stay, contribute and drive Illinois forward."

Namuo has played a pivotal role in advancing the community college baccalaureate (CCB) initiative, serving as the lead for the Illinois Council of Community College

Presidents (ICCCP) Baccalaureate Degree Taskforce. Namuo previously contributed to the successful implementation of CCB degrees in Arizona.

A survey of Illinois community college students was conducted — 200 of whom were JJC students — and their support was overwhelming, with many citing their ability to continue their educational pursuits without interrupting their existing daily lives and commitments.

"Community college bachelor's programs would remove big obstacles like high costs, traditional scheduling and distance from home," said one surveyed JJC student. "It would be easier for me to continue my education if I could stay at JJC."

CCB programs complement, rather than compete with, existing four-year institutions by serving a distinct student population — working adults, place-bound students and those facing financial barriers who might not otherwise pursue a bachelor's degree.

CCB programs fill a critical gap by offering flexible, workforce-aligned pathways that make bachelor's degrees accessible to

those with career and family obligations. Together, these two higher education models will work toward a greater goal: increasing degree attainment and developing a more skilled and educated workforce that strengthens Illinois' economy and communities.

If passed, the legislation would align Illinois with 24 other states that have successfully implemented Community College Baccalaureate programs.

There are 45 community colleges in Illinois, the

nation's third-largest system and the state's leading public workforce trainer.

Gov. Pritzker's proposed fiscal year 2026 budget includes a higher education budget of \$2.73 billion, emphasizing college affordability and a \$10 million increase for the Monetary Award Program (MAP) and a \$46 million, or 3 percent, increase to operational funds for public universities (\$37 million) and community colleges (\$9 million).

WHS Student Council to host March 19 blood drive

The Wilmington High School Student Council will be hosting its annual blood drive on Wednesday, March 19 from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the small gym, 209 Wildcat Court, Wilmington.

Blood donors can sign-up in advance through Versiti Blood Center of Illinois at https://donate-blood.versiti.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/11604489

Blood donors must be age 17 or older, weigh at least 110 pounds, be in

good health and free from cold or flu symptoms on the day of donation. In Illinois, 16-year-olds may donate with written approval from a parent or guardian.

Donors should bring a photo ID with proof of age. Those planning to donate should eat a healthy meal and drink plenty of water before donating.

Those who donate will be given a hat while supplies last.

How good is your trivia? Test it March 2

Coal City United Methodist Church, located at 6805 E. McArdle Road in Coal City, will hold a Trivia Afternoon on Sunday, March 2, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

They invite you to join them for multiple rounds of trivia. Food and beverages will be provided (no alcohol allowed)

The registration fee is

\$160 per table with up to 8 participants per table (\$20 per person for a table of 8). Registration forms are available by contacting the church office at 815-634-8670

Table participants are encouraged to dress in costume and/or to have a theme. A prize will be awarded to the best theme of the event.

The winning table of the trivia contest will also win a prize. Spectators are welcome for \$5 admission at the door as space allows

Doors open at noon. Trivia begins at 1 p.m. Deadline to register is Feb. 25. Gather your trivia teams and plan to join Coal City United Methodist Church for a fun and entertaining afternoon.

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Seated yoga, seasonal sights offered March 9

The Forest Preserve District of Will County will be hosting Seated Yoga and Seasonal Sights on Sunday, March 9, from 11 a.m.-noon at the at Three Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

This program includes

a 30- to 35-minute all-levels seated yoga session and 25- to 30-minute natural world exploration. Both sessions will take place in the Grand Hall. Bring water and wear comfortable clothing. Free, ages 12 or older. Register by March 8.

Baby Valentine contest winners

The annual Baby Valentine Contest sponsored by the GFWC-IL Coal City Junior Woman's Club is excited to announce winners for Baby Valentine 2025.

The first place winner is Kora Powell, daughter of Brittany Cernak and Koltin Powell, of Coal City. There was a tie for second place between Cooper Giblin, son of Courtney and Matt

Giblin, of Coal City and Adeline (AJ) Burt, daughter of Kiersten and Jay Burt, of Coal City. The third place winner is River Rabbinate, son of Alyssa Sharwarko, of Diamond.

The winners received a gift certificate from the Grundy County Chamber of Commerce. All participants of the contest received a certificate of participation.

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Hemp production in U.S. valued at \$291 million

The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service estimated the total value of industrial hemp grown in 2023 in the United States at \$291 million, up 18 percent from 2022.

Hemp production in the open was valued \$258 million, while hemp grown under protection was valued at \$32.9 million. Acres of hemp grown in the open were estimated at 27,680 planted and 21,079 harvested.

Hemp grown under protection was estimated at 3.24 million square feet. These and other statistics can be found in the 2023 National Hemp Report.

As defined in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill), the term "hemp" means the plant species Cannabis sativa L. and any part of that plant such as the seeds, all derivatives, and extracts with a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol concentration of not more than 0.3% on a dry weight basis.

The Domestic Hemp Production Program established in the 2018 Farm Bill allows for the cultivation of hemp under certain conditions.

Registration begins at 5 p.m., with play starting at 6 p.m. The entry fee is \$25 per person, and participants will have plenty of chances to win with raffle baskets, a 50/50 drawing, a Liquor Pull, and more.

Come enjoy a fun night of cards while supporting a great cause. For more information, contact the South Wilmington Grade School.

All students welcome

March 1st
9am-1pm

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'Uncertainty' is the theme of ag economy hearing

BY TAMMIE SLOUP
FARMWEEK

During the past two decades, Illinois corn and soybean farmer Rodney Weinzierl's conservation practices led to fewer crop insurance payments to his family and lower loss ratios.

The third-generation farmer from Stanford said he believes practices such as no-till and cover crops have reduced risk on farms, specifically by making soil more resilient to drought and excess rainfall.

The federal crop insurance program,

Weinzierl said, is designed to operate at a loss ratio of 1.0, meaning for every dollar premium paid in, \$1 is paid out as an indemnity payment.

"Over the past 26 years, my farm has only received 20% of what I should have received at a loss ratio of 1.0, and most farms in Illinois are in similar predicaments," said Weinzierl, who testified during the U.S. House Ag Committee's hearing on the farm economy Feb. 11.

Weinzierl, who is executive director of the IL Corn Growers Association and IL Corn Marketing Board, added if crop insur-

ance rates were re-evaluated, particularly in the Midwest, "we could generate hundreds of millions of dollars in savings. I would encourage those savings to be used to improve crop insurance and support other farm bill titles."

Many of the hearing's themes -- trade, timely reauthorization of a farm bill, tariffs, labor and market access -- were similar to the previous week's Senate Ag Committee ag economy hearing.

With a witness panel comprised of Weinzierl; Ryan Talley, a specialty crop farmer from California; Alisha Schwertner, a cotton and cattle farmer from Texas; and John Newton, executive head of Terrain, the asks from farm country haven't veered much from last year, although with the trade deficit widening and new tariffs being announced, uncertainty looms for farmers.

Access to new markets, labor reform, a Proposition 12 fix and quick reauthorization of a farm bill with Title One enhancements continue to be top priorities for farmers.

Donate blood for a chance at Hawaiian trip

One lucky blood donor will score a trip to Hawaii.

The city of Braidwood will team up with Versiti Blood Centers to host a blood drive.

The blood drive will take place from 2 to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 26 in the council meeting room at Braidwood City Hall, 141 W. Main St.

To register visit www.donateblood.versiti.org

"I think it's important for folks to understand that with crop insurance, farmers have very large deductibles that they take, oftentimes in excess of a 15 or 20% deductible on crop insurance,"

Newton said. "So, at times, farmers are taking very, very deep losses before crop insurance ever triggers an indemnity to the grower. And so, Title One programs have always laid on top of crop insurance and offered a cushion in the event of a low price or low revenue environment like we find ourselves in today."

"I think it's important for farmers to have options for risk management tools; the more tools in the toolbox, they can customize the risk management strategies that they need."

Committee member Mary Miller, an Illinois Republican from Oakland, asked Weinzierl what Congress can do to ensure the Risk Management Agency is able to balance the calls from producers to make crop insurance cheaper while still maintaining enough premium in the risk pool to help cover losses from cata-

strophic events.

"All we're asking is, if we're making these practices, if we're becoming less risky, somehow reflecting that in the rates that we pay," he answered. Weinzierl also said that he does not utilize any federal funding to implement conservation practices.

Committee member Eric Sorensen, an Illinois Democrat from Moline, said he's heard from many farmers who have said the federal crop insurance program needs adjustments.

"My focus remains the same. We must move quickly to pass a five-year bipartisan farm bill that supports fair premiums for our farmers, prioritizes smart farming practices, protects SNAP, opens up new global markets and expands and boosts our crop insurance," he said. House Ag Committee members tussled over the impacts of potential retaliatory tariffs and a pause in some Inflation Reduction Act funding, including for climate-smart and energy programs through USDA.

Committee ranking member Angie Craig, D-Minnesota, said additional uncertainty has been injected into the farm economy conversation the past three weeks: "Consider grant dollars to farmers appropriated by Congress and already under contract with USDA have been frozen. Trade wars with our largest trading partners and largest export markets have been threatened. Food grown in America is rotting at a

warehouse in Texas. We all know, just like before that trade wars will inevitably lead to retaliatory tariffs on American farmers. We know that cutting off foreign food assistance programs also cuts off a major market and farm income."

Committee member Mike Bost, an Illinois Republican from Murphysboro, later countered the challenges that exist in agriculture didn't develop during the new administration.

"It's based on the fact that one, we need to get a farm bill passed," Bost said, adding trade policy the past four years has hurt farmers.

"And our worst-case scenario, if you really study this issue, has been China, who actually plays games with the industry."

Committee Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson, R-Pennsylvania, added he'll be keeping a "vigilant watch" over the administration's actions with tariffs, which he believes will give President Donald Trump leverage to negotiate with foreign nations on trade.

"And where U.S. agriculture gets caught in a crossfire, I'll be the first to speak up on behalf of our producers," he said.

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

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62								63			
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CLUES ACROSS

- Greek mythological figure
- Small amount
- Play a role
- River in Georgia and Alabama
- Water in the solid state
- Ancient Greek sophist
- Having a strong sharp smell or taste
- Fleece
- Writer/actress Dunham
- Behave in a way that belittles
- Comedienne Gasteyer
- Zoroastrian concept of holy fire
- Conceits
- Slowed down
- Nourishment
- Midway between east and south-east
- Fights
- Comedienne Tyler
- Standing operating procedure
- Locks
- Old
- Song sung to one's lover
- Whale ship captain
- Moved quickly on foot
- Volcanic craters
- Large musical instrument
- Liquefied natural gas
- Ethiopian town
- Not closed
- A team's best pitcher
- Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
- Disfigure
- Prefix denoting "in a"
- Sleep

CLUES DOWN

- S. American plant
- Soul and calypso song
- Fruit of the service tree
- Continent
- Albania's capital
- Poisonous plant
- Argues
- Assists
- Town in Galilee
- Russian leader
- Promotional materials
- Wings
- Not odd
- Expression of creativity
- Conceptualize
- A digital tape recording of sound
- Peyton's little brother
- Cost, insurance and freight (abbr.)
- Difference in potential
- Owner
- I (German)
- Chinese conception of poetry
- The world of the dead
- Sign language
- Coincide
- Religious observance
- Confined condition (abbr.)
- Polite interruption sound
- Texas ballplayer
- Type of sword
- Abba __, Israeli politician
- Basic unit of a chemical element
- Native American people in California
- Swiss river
- Hebrew calendar month
- Easily swindled person
- One point south of southwest
- Small island (British)

Attorney Wysocki files Clennon estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE
OF MARY ANN CLENNON
Deceased; No. 2024PR785

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given to creditors of the death of MARY ANN CLENNON. Letters of Office were issued to Maureen E. Clennon whose address is 1610 Arden Place, Joliet, Illinois as Independent Executor, whose attorney of record is Marilyn L. Wysocki, June, Prodehl, Renzi & Lynch, L.L.C., 1861 Black Road, Joliet, Illinois 60435.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Circuit Clerk's Office, Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, on or before the 12th day of August, 2025 if mailing or delivery of a notice from the representative is required by Section 18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered by claimant to the representative and to the attorney within ten (10) days after it has been filed.

Marilyn L. Wysocki
For the Estate of Mary Ann Clennon
Deceased

BY: Marilyn L. Wysocki
1861 Black Road
Joliet, IL 60435
815-725-8000

Published in the Free Press
Advocate, Wednesday, Feb. 12, 19
and 26, 2025.

Attorney Wysocki files Tudisco estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE
OF ROCCO TUDISCO Deceased;
No. 2025PR61

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given to creditors of the death of Rocco Tudisco. Letters of Office were issued to Anna R. Martin whose address is 1061 San Mateo Dr., Romeoville, Illinois as Independent Executor, whose attorney of record is Marilyn L. Wysocki, June, Prodehl, Renzi & Lynch, L.L.C., 1861 Black Road, Joliet, Illinois 60435.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Circuit Clerk's Office, Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, on or before the 26th day of August, 2025 if mailing or delivery of a notice from the representative is required by Section 18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered by claimant to the representative and to the attorney within ten (10) days after it has been filed.

Marilyn L. Wysocki

For the Estate of
Rocco Tudisco, Deceased
BY: Marilyn L. Wysocki
1861 Black Road
Joliet, IL 60435
815-725-8000

Published in the Free Press
Advocate, Wednesday, Feb. 26, Mar.
5 and 12, 2025.

Sheriff's sale of 916 Laurel Dr., Unit B

PUBLIC NOTICE

PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

STATE OF ILLINOIS)
COUNTY OF WILL) SS.
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Freedom Mortgage Corporation, Plaintiff,
vs.
Toni M. Henderson; et. al. Defendant.
No. 23 FC 0304

NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

Public notice is hereby given that pursuant to a judgment entered in the above cause on the 13th day of September, 2023, MIKE KELLEY, Sheriff of Will County, Illinois, will on Thursday, the 13th day of March, 2025, commencing at 12:00 o'clock noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, sell at public auction to the highest and best bidder or bidders the following-described real estate:

THE SOUTHERN 42.50 FEET OF LOT 23 IN MEADOWBROOK, 2ND ADDITION, A SUBDIVISION OF PART OF THE NORTH HALF OF SECTION 20, TOWNSHIP 34 NORTH, RANGE 10 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED MAY 23, 1997 AS DOCUMENT NO. R97-43158, IN WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

Commonly known as: 916 Laurel Dr Unit B, Elwood, IL 60421
Description of Improvements: Single Family Home
P.I.N.: 10-11-20-202-014-0000

Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County.

In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act.

Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State.

FOR INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:
Codilis & Associates, P.C.
15W030 N. Frontage Road Suite 100
Burr Ridge, Illinois 60527
P: 630-794-5300
F: 630-794-5090

MIKE KELLEY
Sheriff of Will County
Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, Feb. 19, 26 and Mar. 5, 2025.

Attorney Meents files Vercelli estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE
OF SHARON LOUISE VERCELLI,
Deceased;
No. 2025 PR 45

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Sharon Louise Vercelli. Letters of Office as Independent Executor were issued on February 6, 2025, to Emil Paul Vercelli, Jr., whose address is 940 East John Street, Wilmington, Illinois 60481; whose attorney is Meents Law, P.C., 25158 W. Eames Street, Unit A, Channahon, Illinois 60410. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at the Will County Courthouse, 100 West Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, on or before August 27, 2025, or if mailing or delivery of a notice from the representative is required by Section 18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a Claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered by the claimant to the representative and to the attorney within ten (10) days after it has been filed.

E-filing is now mandatory 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/fac/gethelp.asp> or talk with your local circuit clerk's office. If you cannot e-file, you may be able to get an exemption that allows you to file in-person or by mail. Ask your circuit clerk for more information or visit www.illinoislegalsaid.org.

Emil Paul Vercelli, Jr.
Independent Executor of the Estate of Sharon Louise Vercelli, Deceased
Frank J. Meents
Meents Law, P.C.
25158 W. Eames Street, Unit A
Channahon, Illinois 60410
Telephone: (815) 534-9515
Facsimile: (815) 534-9516
Attorney Code: 06298859
E-mail: Frank@MeentsLaw.com

Published in the Free Press
Advocate on Wednesday, Feb. 19, 26
and March 5, 2025.

Attorney Meents files Goad estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE
OF LARRY RAY GOAD, Deceased;
No. 2025 PR 46

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of LARRY RAY GOAD. Letters of Office as Independent Administrator were issued on February 6, 2025, to Stacey Legg, whose address is 640 Berta Road, Diamond, Illinois 60416; whose attorney is Frank J. Meents, 25158 West Eames Street, Unit A, Channahon, Illinois 60410. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, on or before August 27, 2025, or if mailing or delivery of a notice from the representative is required by Section 18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a Claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered by the claimant to the representative and to the attorney within ten (10) days after it has been filed.

E-filing is now mandatory 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/fac/gethelp.asp> or talk with your local circuit clerk's office. If you cannot e-file, you may be able to get an exemption that allows you to file in-person or by mail. Ask your circuit clerk for more information or visit www.illinoislegalsaid.org.

Stacey Legg
Independent Administrator
of the Estate of Larry Ray Goad,
Deceased

Frank J. Meents
25158 W. Eames Street, Unit A
Channahon, Illinois 60410
Telephone: (815) 534-9515
Facsimile: (815) 534-9516
Attorney Code: 06298859
E-mail: Frank@MeentsLaw.com
Published in the Free Press
Advocate on Wednesday, Feb. 19, 26
and March 5, 2025.

Elwood School District seeking bids for 2025 Media lab furniture project

PUBLIC NOTICE

SECTION 001113
ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS
ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS
1.1 BID INFORMATION

A. Sealed bids will be received by the Board of Education, Elwood Community Consolidated School District 203, on March 5, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. prevailing time for the 2025 Media Lab Furniture project. Bids will be opened at the District Office, 409 North Chicago Avenue, Elwood, Illinois 60421.

B. A Non-Mandatory Pre-Bid Conference will be held on February 26, 2025, 3:30 p.m. at the District Office, 409 North Chicago Avenue, Elwood, Illinois 60421. All bidders are encouraged to attend and sign in at the meeting which will also be attended by the Owner, Architect and Engineer.

C. Anticipated Award of Contract date: March 11, 2025
D. Anticipated Start of Construction: August 8, 2025
E. Anticipated Substantial Completion date: August 15, 2025
F. Lump sum bid proposals will be received for this project at the scheduled time of receipt bids and will be publicly opened at that time.

G. Bid security in the form of a bid bond, certified check or cash in an amount equal to 10 percent of the base bid amount shall be submitted with the bid. Should a bid bond be submitted, the bid bond shall be payable to the Board of Education, Elwood Community Consolidated School District 203.

H. Bids shall be submitted on or before the specified closing time in an opaque sealed envelope addressed to: Mr. Tim Page, Superintendent.
I. The District reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, or waive any irregularities or informalities, and to make the award in the best interest of the District.

J. All bidders must comply with applicable Illinois Law requiring the payment of prevailing wages by all Contractors working on public works. Bidder must comply with the Illinois Statutory requirements regarding labor, including Equal Employment Opportunity Laws.

K. Bidding documents are on file and may be obtained upon receipt of deposit in the amount of \$100 for 1 set of the bidding documents consisting of 2 sets of plans, 2 Project Manuals, 1 Compact Disc containing PDF files of drawings and project manual, and 1 set of bid forms from: Gill Reprographics, Inc. (GRI), 17W735 Butterfield Road, Suite A, Oak Brook Terrace, IL 60181, (630) 652-0800, www.gillrepro.com. If only digital files of bidding documents are requested, a one-time non-refundable fee of \$15.00 (payable to Gill Reprographics, Inc.) can be paid. Login information to download digital files will be provided by Gill Reprographics, Inc.

L. The Architect for the above referenced project is TRIA Architecture, Inc., (630) 455-4500.
The Board of Education
Elwood Community Consolidated School District 203
409 North Chicago Avenue
Elwood, Illinois 60421
Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2025.

The big problem with ultra-processed foods

Around half of what Americans eat is considered ultra-processed food – think pre-packaged and fast-foods. These products are often filled with unhealthy ingredients, leading to an array of health problems.

"These foods are giving you an excessive amount of sodium, fat and sugar, and not enough nutrition," says Jeanna Rich, an oncology registered dietitian with OSF Cancer Support Services. Rich says the longer the ingredient list, especially words you've never heard of before, the more processed the foods are.

"If it has a ton of ingredients that include additives, coloring agents or words you just don't know are true foods, it's definitely ultra-processed," Rich says.

Health risks of ultra-processed foods While the saying "too much of a good thing is a bad thing," may be true, too much of a bad thing is far worse.

"A lot of ultra-processed foods will have a large amount of saturated fat, also known as the 'bad fat.' That fat is linked to higher risk of developing heart disease, diabetes and other health issues," Rich says. "The additives, food dyes, sugar and fat combined can put us at an increased risk for developing cancer and other diseases as well."

The link between diabetes and ultra-processed foods: a surplus of added sugars.

"What we're seeing right now, is chil-

dren developing Type 2 diabetes earlier and earlier," Rich says. "Extra added sugar is not good for blood sugar management or your immune function." Rich adds that diets high in ultra-processed foods have also been linked to obesity.

Eating foods high in sodium can lead to blood pressure issues and heart disease. There's no nutritional benefit to ultra-processed foods, Rich says, particularly when it comes to getting more fiber in our diet, which helps lower blood pressure, helps us lose weight and lessens inflammation.

Preserving, drying, heating and curing foods is where they can become detrimental to our health. This is when preservatives get added into the foods that have no health benefits and may even have health harms in them. Many items at fast food restaurants are known to be ultra-processed because they can last a long time in their packaging.

Hyperpalatable foods

Many foods are meant to seem appealing, and even rewarding, to eat. These are called hyperpalatable foods, and they have addictive qualities to them. Meat, ice cream, snacks and sodas headline this list. But some frozen meals and even vegetables cooked with things like cheese sauce can be added to the list as well.

"A lot of the products in these foods can act as an addictive behavior. They can

release brain chemicals that make us feel good, then bring us back down," Rich says. "A lot of these foods can cause people to want to keep eating them, and it worsens their health overall."

Don't judge a food box by its cover

Rich says the front of product boxes can be misleading. Words like "natural," "organic," or "healthy" get thrown around a lot. She recommends you really take a good look at the ingredients list and nutrition label.

If a product begins with the ingredient corn syrup, followed by long words you've never heard of before, these are unnatural ingredients you should stay away from. They also include seed oils and synthetic dyes.

Healthier options will have ingredients like pureed fruits, vitamins and minerals. The color will also come from natural ingredients like carrots, cabbage and/or vegetable juices, not synthetic dyes which originate from petroleum.

Processed vs. Ultra-processed

Any food taken from its original form is considered processed food.

"If you're not picking an apple from a tree, or drinking milk straight from a cow, we are technically processing our food," Rich says.

The jury's still out on the exact definition of an ultra-processed food. Ultra-processed foods will typically have thickeners in them, like modified starches,

sugar substitutes, synthetic food dyes, artificial flavors – mostly anything that you wouldn't ever find in your kitchen.

Peanut butter

Many peanut butters are ultra-processed and have trans-fat in them. Key words to look out for: hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated. The label may say zero grams trans-fat, but if the ingredient says hydrogenated on it, it will still contain small traces of trans-fat in the product, Rich says.

Healthier peanut butter options will have different nuts and seeds as the main ingredients, making it a more wholesome food.

Sugary cereals

Sugary cereals can often be ultra-processed foods. Kellogg's Mini Wheats has brown rice syrup, corn syrup, and "other natural flavors and coloring" in it. "These are things we want to avoid, especially when we have healthier alternatives," Rich adds.

So, what do we do?

You may be surrounded by fast food restaurants on your drive home, and the grocery store aisles are filled with ultra-processed foods, but healthier options are out there. Creating recipes with lean meats, seafood, vegetables, fruits and whole grains is a great start.

CLASSIFIEDS

CLASSIFIED DEADLINES

Pre-payment required for all classified ads unless customer has a pre established business account

Deadlines

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The Braidwood Journal — The Coal City Courier — The Free Press Advocate

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Line Ads are up to 30 words
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Come work with an industry leader. Several positions available. Seeking easy going people who love to multi-task. Bilinguals and Veterans are welcome to apply. Full or Part time with flexible hours. Will train in all job aspects. Morris Trailer Sales Inc. 815-941-2800 to set up an appointment for an interview. cc8-11

Experienced barber needed for open chair at The Hair Care Barbershop, 206 N. Water Street, Wilmington. Apply in person Mon. through Sat., 9am-6pm ca8-9

Seeking a housecleaner to clean a 2 level house twice per month. 815-341-9318. ca8-9

MOBILE HOMES FOR SALE

Victorian 14x70, 980 sq ft. 2 bedroom located in Diamond. Handy man special. Partially remodeled, new and like new extras. Can be moved. \$3500. OBO 815-325-4461. cc8-11

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REAL ESTATE

SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE OF **916 Laurel Dr Unit B, Elwood, IL 60421** (Single Family Home). On the **13th day of March, 2025** to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **Freedom Mortgage Corporation Plaintiff V. Toni M. Henderson; et al. Defendant. Case No. 23 FC 0304** in the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois. Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal

fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact: **Codilis & Associates, P.C. 15W030 N. Frontage Road Suite 100 Burr Ridge, IL 60527 P: 630-794-5300 F: 630-794-9300** PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. Published in the Free Press Newspapers on Wed., February 19, 26 & March 5, 2025.

REAL ESTATE

SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE OF **725 Elmo Court, Godley, IL 60407** (Single family residence, 1 Story, 3 bedrooms and 2 baths). On the **6th day of March, 2025** to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **Grundy Bank Plaintiff V. Daniel Dietrich, Tarya L. Dietrich, Illinois Housing Development Authority, and Non-Record Claimants Defendant. Case No. 22 FC 1371** in the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois. Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following

application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact: **GEIGER VAZQUEZ 415 LIBERTY STREET MORRIS, IL 60450 P: 815-942-5072 F: 815-942-5073** PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. Published in the Free Press Newspaper on Wed., February 12, 19 & 26, 2025.

SERVICE & REPAIRS

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Mandy Eaton
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- Must be comfortable with driving at least 3500 miles per week and be able to stay 2-3 weeks over the road then 2-3 days home.
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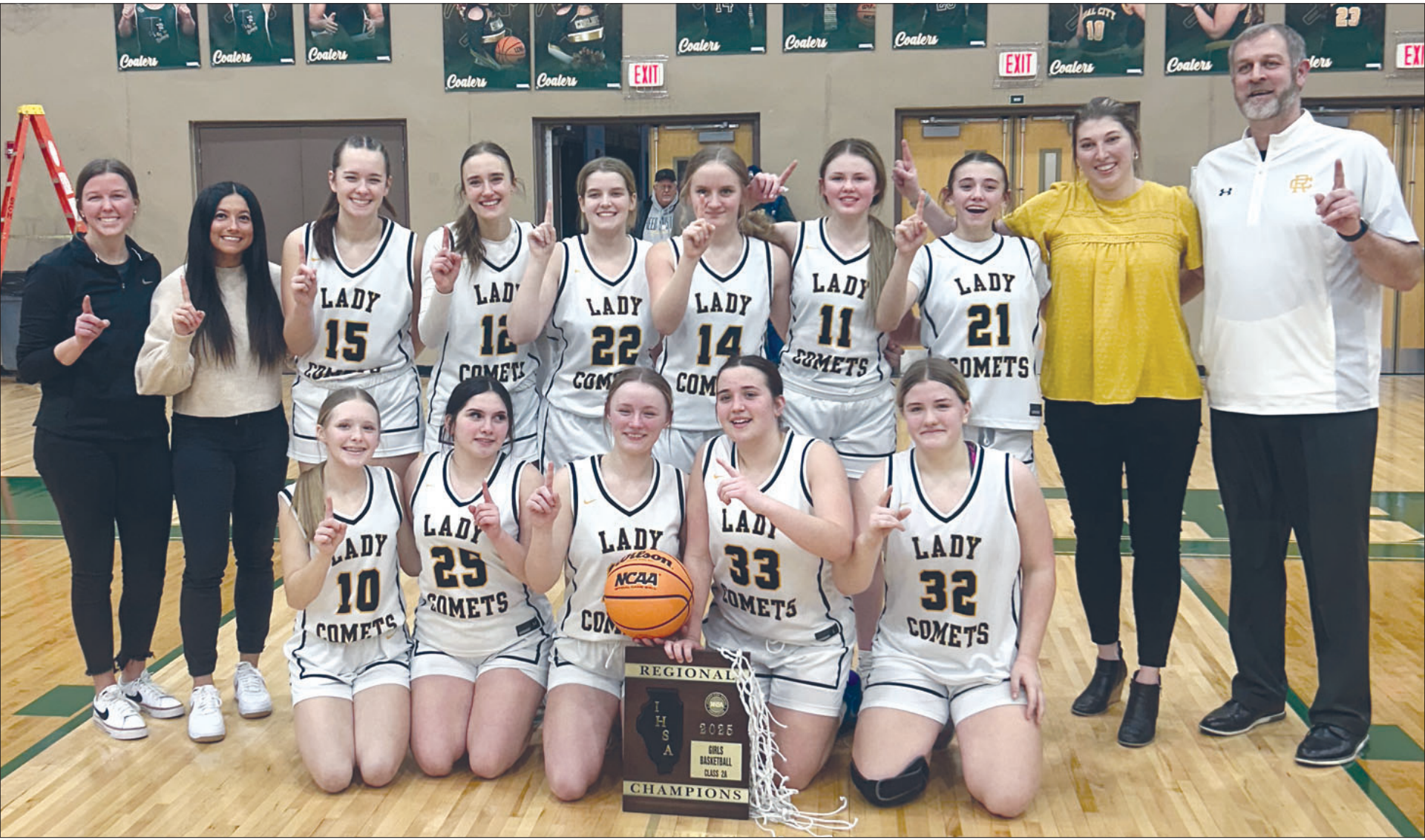
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8	6	8	9	9	7	7	1
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COMET SPORTS



Courtesy photo

REGIONAL CHAMPIONS! The Reed-Custer girls basketball team made it a Cinderella season on Thursday when they beat Joliet Catholic Academy to claim the Coal City Regional. Celebrating their first place finish are Lady Comets (kneeling, from left) Kamryn Wilkey, Brooklyn Gonzalez, Cameron Wallace, Leah Grace and Harlie Liebermann. Standing are Coach Claire Mountain, Coach Taylor Meents, Ana Smith, Gwen Stewart, Skylar Wilkins, Izzy Toller, Morgan Toler, Alyssa Wollenzien, Coach Shelby Zwolinski and Coach Matt Hines.

Lady Comets claim regional crown after 19-year span

The Lady Comets upended Coal City and Joliet Catholic Academy to win the Coal City regional last week. It's the first time in 19 years that Reed-Custer has won a regional and by the way this young team played, they deserved it.

Coal City (21-10) had defeated Reed-Custer twice before during regular season play but on Tuesday the Lady Comets had enough, putting the hosts away 48-33.

Reed-Custer held a 13-12 lead after one quarter before Coal City tied it up 19-19 at the half. Entering the final quarter the Lady Comets held a 31-29 edge when they went on a 17-4 run, led by sophomore Alyssa Wollenzien who finished with 22 points including a trio of

three-pointers.

She was backed by junior Gwen Stewart who scored 10 points while grabbing nine rebounds. Scoring six points each were Morgan Toler and Leah Grace while Harlie Liebermann chipped in with three points and Cameron Wallace one.

Reed-Custer advanced to the championship game on Thursday against JCA who had beaten Wilmington 36-33.

After trailing through the first three quarters, the Lady Comets pulled it together for a 23-11 run in the fourth to win 51-42.

This time it was Leah Grace who had the hot hand,

sinking four three-pointers to anchor her team with 23 points and six rebounds. Wollenzien still managed to score 11 points despite being pressured all night while Stewart tallied seven points and six rebounds. Liebermann came through for six points while Toler contributed four points and an impressive nine rebounds.

The Lady Comets, with a 15-15 record, advanced to the Herscher sectional to face Watseka last night (Tuesday). If they won they will play Thursday at 6 p.m. for the sectional title against either Bishop McNamara or Seneca.



Photo by Kelly Van Duyne

REACHING FOR an ankle of Marian opponent Austin Hagevold is Reed-Custer's Cole Harris at 113 pounds.



Photo by Kelly Van Duyne

REED-CUSTER Colton Drinkwine (right) squares off against Camden Spiniolas from Marian in the preliminary round of the state wrestling tournament on Thursday.

Reardon's 25 points not enough to lift Comets in regional

A dismal second quarter for the Reed-Custer boys basketball team, with only four points scored, came back to haunt the Comets during their regional opener against Southland College Prep on Monday.

Had they kept their tempo like they did the other three quarters, when they outscored SCP, they wouldn't have suffered a season-ending loss, 54-51.

The Comets were up 12-10 after one but trailed 28-16 at the half. They came out in the third with a 20-12 run to stay within striking distance. Senior Jacob Reardon kept them in contention by scoring 25 points but they ended up losing by three.

The Comets finish the season with an 11-20 record.



Photo by Kelly Van Duyne

REED-CUSTER JUNIOR Dominic Alaimo ended up medaling for 6th place during the state wrestling finals on Saturday. Here he won a 7-5 decision over Alex Schaefer from Ottawa Marquette.

Alaimo medals to lead Comets at state

The Reed-Custer wrestling team sent five qualifiers to the IHSA Class individual state finals, held Thursday through Saturday at the State Farm Center in Champaign, IL.

Junior Dominic Alaimo (215) led the way for the Comets, earning a 6th-place finish to cap off an impressive season.

Alaimo battled through the consolation bracket after an opening-round 6-4 loss to eventual state finalist Kaden Tidwell (Vandalia).

He rebounded with three straight wins, including two pins and a 7-5 decision victory over Alex Schaefer (Ottawa Marquette) to secure a top-six placement.

After falling in the consolation semifinals, Alaimo wrestled for 5th

place, where he dropped a 9-5 decision to Coal City rival John Keigher, concluding his season at 45-9 and standing on the podium as a state medalist.

Other state qualifiers for the Comets included Colton Drinkwine (106) who entered the tournament with a 44-5 record but fell in two close decisions, 3-1 in the first round and 7-4 in the consolation bracket, ending his stand-out season just short of placing.

Cole Harris (113) struggled against tough competition, falling by first-period pin in the opening round and then being eliminated in a technical fall loss in the consolation bracket.

Kaaden Wood (120) suffered back-to-back falls, including a 1:50 pin by

Adam Glauser (Richmond-Burton) in the first round, ending his season at 37-13.

Jeremy Eggleston (138) picked up a second-period pin in his first consolation match but was eliminated in a technical fall loss in the following round, closing his season at 45-5.

While Alaimo's 6th-place finish highlighted the tournament for Reed-Custer, all five Comets showed grit. Eggleston is the only senior in the group so odds are the rest will be back at Champaign a year from now. With several returning wrestlers and valuable state experience gained, Reed-Custer will look to build on this year's accomplishments and come back even stronger next season.