

Safety issues, truck repair concerns questioned, answered

BY MARNEY SIMON EDITOR

Braidwood's Public Property commissioner said he wants some answers when it comes to how the city keeps records, particularly when it comes to the fleet of vehicles utilized by public works.

During the regular City Council meeting on Feb. 14, Public Property Commissioner Warren Wietting said he has been working on an inventory of all property owned by the city. As commissioner of public property, Wietting is charged with overseeing all the city's property, including City Hall, the wastewater treatment plant look at numbers, so, going back to the er for \$3,525.

any property which is not used by a specific department.

Wietting said that while technically the public works vehicles, which are utilized by the streets department, are not his purview, he had some concerns with the city's large trucks and their maintenance records.

Wietting said at issue were multiple maintenance records for some of the city's salt/plow trucks, which he said were missing itemized invoices for expensive repairs.

"Âs a business man who has managed many companies through-

and water plant, all real estate, and maintenance on the vehicles, what I found is there's very little maintenance records on any of the city's vehicles or equipment. Which is kind of alarming to me because everywhere you go, anyone who has any kind of vehicle fleets, they have files on these things. Paper files, it's on a spreadsheet," Wietting said. "I'm trying to get a fair assessment of what the city actually owns and what equipment is in all of your buildings."

Wietting said there were four bills in particular that caught his eye, each for maintenance on trucks. The bills had various totals, one for \$860, one out the years, I'm a numbers guy. I for \$4,635, one for \$8,536, and anoth-

"It's very vague on the invoices so bear with me," Wietting said. "There's no detailed invoices... and, the most alarming one was on truck 316. It doesn't give any itemizations. And, that was an \$8,536 bill with no accountability for parts or what was done on that vehicle. So, this makes me question, where are the records, and why did we spend that money? Why did we spend the city's money?"

Wietting went further to say that he had questions specifically for Public Works Foreman Nick Grygiel, who had turned in the paperwork to City Hall for processing and approval of payment by the council.

When it comes to an explanation,

Grygiel and Streets Commissioner Fay Smith said Wietting is reaching for answers that are already readily available.

Grygiel said the city's public works fleet usually gets maintenance at J&R Service Center in Gardner. Grygiel said that after Wietting made his public statements, he reached out to J&R for various invoices, which he said had already been submitted to the city, payment for which was also approved by the full city council last

Grygiel said the first issue is that when comparing the money the city **SEE TRUCKS, PAGE 2**



RC piloting platform to complement classwork

BY MARNEY SIMON EDITOR

The Reed-Custer School District is looking to add some additional materials to complement its regular academic offerings

On Feb. 15, district offi-cials explained to the members of the Board of Education that a pilot program for an additional learning platform was underway.

"Curriculum wise, we are moving forward with a pilot for Nusela," Assistant phies, court opinions, narra-Superintendent for Teaching tive nonfiction, fiction, and and Learning Danielle Valiente myths, legends, and folktales. told the board. Nuseia is something that we've had free that we're going to look in versions of for a long time, but grades three through 12, and they have really re-upped what you get with the premium ver-

sion, so we have a lot of teachers who are interested."

According to the Nusela website, the content provided to school districts comes from more than 100 established partners and makes it instruction ready for K-12 classrooms.

Products are customized by state in order to follow state standards of instruction.

The texts represent a wide range of subjects from a variety of sources, including news, reference materials, speeches, opinions, interviews, biographies, court opinions, narra-

Photo by Marney Simor

THE TURF LOOKS inviting at Reed-Custer, ready to welcome spring sports to Comet Stadium. But, repairs are needed before anyone can take the field this season. Water and rain have caused some sinkholes in the new turf, which will be repaired in the coming weeks at no charge to the district.

Problems on the home turf

Fixes on the way for issues at Reed-Custer field

BY MARNEY SIMON EDITOR

The new turf field at Reed-Custer High School

While work on the improvements is moving forward with warmer weather ahead of schedule, there has also unfortunately been some bad news with regard to the field

"Since we did the field last summer, if you remember how dry it was, it didn't rain a lot last summer. So, they put the tile in, they put the subbase in, they put the top stone in, and it never rained, they turfed the field. Perfect,' Superintendent Mark Mitchell told members of the Board of putting installation of the Education during their regular pening in, they are having

bleachers and press box a bit monthly meeting on Feb. 15. trouble with the trench,' "But, since then, we've gotten rain and we're starting to get some sinkholes around the perimeter of the field in a line where they put the main perimeter tile. The whole field is patterned tile into the perimeter tile.'

Mitchell said the root of the problem has already been requires the turf to be peeled diagnosed, so now it's just a matter of digging in and field. addressing the issue.

'What they think is hap-

Mitchell said. "There is sand here, they were having trouble and they dug it but the sand is filling in. They think that some of the pipe may not have been jointed in these spots proper-ly. It's flushing in [sand] whenever it rains.

Mitchell said the fix back all the way around the

"We are replacing the turf

SEE TURF, PAGE 2

This will be something

SEE BOARD, PAGE 2

Braidwood looks to address issues at WWTP

BY MARNEY SIMON EDITOR

The city of Braidwood's wastewater treatment plant went online in 2011, the 2 million gallon per day oxidation ditch plant promised to support long term growth for the city.

Now more than a decade into operation, there are some small issues and fixes that city leaders want to see addressed at the site.

During the Feb. 14 regu-lar meeting of the City Council, Public Buildings and Property Commissioner Warren Wietting said he

recently visited the city's wastewater treatment plant, hoping to get a better understanding of the science behind

that happens after you flush. "This past week I requested a plant walkthrough [of the wastewater treatment plant] to get a little understanding," Vietting said. "A couple of my family members have spent a lot of years in water waste treatment plants in municipal-

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Trucks

has paid for maintenance, Wietting was comparing apples to oranges. Grygiel also said the detailed invoices were there, it was just a matter of flipping the page.

"The invoice [for the \$860 work], the truck had a brake chamber, a slack adjuster and a clevis replaced. So, three small little parts," Grygiel said, providing those invoices to the Braidwood Journal. "The one he's questioning that was \$8,500, he said there's no invoice. Well, usually we get an invoice and I complete a purorder chase and [Commissioner Smith] signs it. I have several pages of parts listed. I'm not going to write that all out [on the purchase order sheet], I staple the invoice to it. So, they have this information. He's looking at the purchase order, and not looking at the rest of it. It's at City Hall. When I turn it in, it's the purchase order with the printed invoice, and it shows everything that's done to it, all the parts, all the labor, everything is broken down. So, he is literally reading off a purchase order sheet, which yes, does not say anything, it just says repairs made for \$8,500. But, he didn't read the invoice part attached to it, or he's literally just going off the bills list where it says, truck repairs \$8,500."

The invoice provided by Grygiel for the \$8,500 repairs is dated Oct. 20, 2022, and does show a full breakdown of the service to the truck, including \$2,000 for a king pin kit, \$1,500 for rods, and \$1,600 for brake shoes and drums, among other parts and labor charges. Grygiel said parts and labor are completely different from the comparison repairs made to a different truck for \$860. The invoice on those lesser repairs was dated Dec. 3, 2021.

"He's questioning it now, and the minutes of the meeting where that \$8,500 got approved, [Commissioner Money] made the motion to pay the bills and that was included in there, and Warren seconded it back in November," Grygiel said. "So, why are you questioning it four months later?"

It's just the first on a long list of miscommunication and lack of collaboration that Grygiel said has been plaguing the city, causing issues between Smith's streets department and the rest of the City Council.

Grygiel said part of the problem is an antiquated filing system, where the city utilizes individual Word documents for each vehicle. Grygiel said maintenance is entered into a different document, which means that the information is all there, but users need to go into each document one by one to look at the records, which can take some time and effort. Grygiel provided those records to the *Braidwood Journal* as well.

"There is a trail. It's a crude way to do it, but it is there," he said.

Also during the Feb. 14 council meeting, Wietting listed another issue that caused him tremendous concern when it came to the record keeping.

"I wanted to particularly talk about parts for truck 310, Wietting continued. "This is something that we were all aware of, and I was curious why it hadn't been brought up before so the public is knowledgeable about this. Myself, Fay Smith, Nick Grygiel, and all city workers looked at truck 310, and we all saw three broken U-bolts ... They were very corroded and had been broken for some time, and many of us said this thing is not safe to drive, let's get some parts and get it repaired. And that was the end of my conversation.'

However, Wietting said a few days later, truck 310 had a near accident in Wilmington, when the rear tandem axle snapped off and ended up in a ditch.

"If those U-bolts would have been purchased and replaced, we wouldn't be having this conversation, I wouldn't be informing you guys of what happened," Wietting said. "So, several days later after that occurrence, a young man stopped at my place of business quite shook up, and he let me know that the rear

tandem axles of truck 310 were in a ditch along Route 53. And I asked him why were we driving this truck when it was unsafe. Well, I was told to, he said, and we had some conversation. I said it's best that you go back to your job and ask why, that's not my department, I had nothing to do with putting someone in an unsafe vehicle. But, I do have questions about why would someone do that?"

Wietting said he wanted to know why Streets Commissioner Smith or Foreman Grygiel had approved the use of the truck at all.

"I would think there would be an incident report of what occurred, this picture especially has my curiosity. Because it is a picture of the tow truck that came to get this 310 truck of the city's with Mr. Grygiel standing right next to it with a big smile on his face," Wietting said, holding up a photograph from the scene of the incident. "That alarms me, why would somebody have a smile on their face when a tragedy like this just happened. So, I would like to request an incident report from the street department of why and how this happened, when many of us and many in the street department and a couple of the other employees said that truck is unsafe to drive. I don't think I'm out of line asking for an incident report of what happened and why it happened.

As far as that issue with the broken truck, Grygiel said the truck had passed its safety inspections, copies of which he provided to the *Braidwood Journal*.

"Never were the words 'that truck is unsafe do not drive it' ever came out of Warren's mouth," Grygiel said.

When the incident happened back on Nov. 18, Grygiel said the truck was on its way to Joliet for repairs of those Ubolts.

Grygiel said the part of the truck that broke was the rear axle, when the part being addressed originally by Wietting was in the front. He said all salt and plow trucks face erosion, due to years of hauling salt and spreading it, which is corrosive. But, as the city's fleet ages, problems and breakdowns become unavoidable.

Grygiel also said the streets department budget makes constant repairs difficult. He said that while he and other streets workers are capable of basic repairs, salt/plow trucks need more expensive, specialized care. Smith has continually argued with the City Council that his budget has been slashed to an unmanageable level.

"I didn't think the rear end of the truck was going to come out, because the broken bolts were actually on the front axle. It had nothing to do with the rear end," Grygiel said. "The rear end, whether it had something to do with stress fractures or bolts or something, it broke. It could have been a stress fracture. Unless I had an x-ray where I could see in there, I can't tell they're broke. They're corroded. But so is every other truck we own, and that one is 26 years old. You take a vehicle that's been in salt and make it last 26 years."

As for Wietting's question of why he's smiling in the photo, Grygiel said the insinuation is nonsense.

"If you want to know why I was laughing, it was the irony of it," Grygiel said. "It was a few weeks before that in an open council meeting, Fay brought up that the trucks need to be replaced, and [city administrator Tony Altiery] made a comment that the trucks... were in good shape. And within a week, this happens. Are you kidding me?"

Smith said the issues amount to politics as the election approaches, and took issue with the suggestion that the streets department is not being operated in a safe manner.

"We have never driven a truck in my days, never, without safety being first," Commissioner Smith said. "I have told my guys, if they every think something is unsafe, we'll make it safe or we won't do it."

Grygiel did provide the *Braidwood Journal* with an incident report from the breakdown of truck 310, although that report is not dated.

Board

basically what the program does is, it takes articles that you would see published in the mainstream media, and then it brings them in, narrows is down to just facts, and it also gives you the publication at five different reading levels across grades three through 12. That way it's approachable for every student, regardless of their reading level," Valiente said, adding that the program pairs with the curriculum already in place, meaning the articles that come from Nusela go along with the lessons that are already taught in classes such as ELA and social

studies. "So, we are going to be working with this for the rest of the year and then making a decision on whether we want to move forward with purchasing it for the full year next year," Valiente said.

The content is intended to meet academic needs and align with state-specific education learning standards, and does not contain expletives or gratuitous/graphic content, and gives teachers tools to utilize selections appropriately for grade levels.

In other business before the board during their regular meeting in February:

• Valiente said the district is in the process of wrapping up MAP testing and access testing, and will begin required standardized testing for students on March 6.

"There's a lot of testing happening. So, right now it's a lot of test prep, a lot of behind the scenes work, so we want to thank the teachers because it's a busy season."

• Assistant Superintendent for Operations Matt Peterson told the board that Makayla Wilkins, a student at RCHS had become HP certified, giving the senior hat tip for the accomplishment.

"It's something that she can put on her resume, and consisted of her taking several online classes with Duayne Dubbert at the high school, and then she had to finish it up with a test," Peterson said. "This now lets her do any warranty work on our HP laptops, if we need to replace a screen or a keyboard she can help them work on that, she's certified to do that. That's going to help her in her future.'

• Peterson said the district was also in the market for some new copy machines, now that their five year lease on copiers is expiring. Peterson said one big change when it comes to copies is that paper needs have been drastically reduced.

"With [the current] contract, we've had 3.9 million copies a year for our current usage, down to 2.9 million copies a year, so substantially less," Peterson said. "We kind of owe a lot of that to covid, because we're one to one with our devices, we have Google classroom, the projection system and document cameras, the teachers just became used to not making so many copies. So, a million less copies a year, approximately 25% less, it's going to be substantially less.

Peterson did note that like most things, prices overall have gone up for copiers. The district has officially kicked off the process with a request for proposals.

• District officials reported that 200 students have already registered for the 2023-2024 school year. An \$20 early registration discount applies to those students who register by March 31. A reminder will be sent home to parents as that early registration deadline approaches.

Turf

on the visitors side, because they cut into it six times to get through the football season," Mitchell said. "So, they already ordered that piece of turf. They're paying for that, it's not on us. They're going to peel back the turf, they're going to dig up the entire tile line and make sure that all the joints are proper, fix the areas."

Mitchell said after the tiles are addressed and repaired, he'll be in touch with the Braidwood Fire Protection District, in order to utilize the fire hydrants to test the field's ability to deal with more water. "We're going to create a rain event before we cover it back up, put water all along it, and make sure it doesn't settle," Mitchell said.

problem could have on spring sports. "The problem is, they

want to get on it immediately... and hopefully have it ready for girls soccer. The worst case scenario, we could play a few soccer games on the grass field," Mitchell continued. "Then as they get it done, we'll move to the turf. But, we have to take care of it. You go out there right now and [some of the damage] is in the field of play for soccer, you could twist your ankle, sink in in spots. It's disappointing. I will say this, they are owning it, they are apologetic." Mitchell added that the soil conditions in the area have made for some extra headaches throughout the upgrade process. The sandy soil and water table has made construction conditions less than ideal. It's a problem the district—and anyone who has built in Braidwood-has always had to deal with.

District officials noted there were also some soil issues to overcome when the new lights were put in several years ago.

"You dig a hole and it fills back in, either with sand or water or both," Mitchell said. "So, that's where we're at, everything will get fixed exactly where we want it."

The mild weather has allowed work on the outdoor projects to move ahead a little quicker than expected this winter. Mitchell said while there was not yet a specific timeline for the field work, the



One downside, however, is the effect that fixing the

plans are to start as soon as possible as long as the weather cooperates.

The outdoor improvements, including the artificial turf, track improvements, a new scoreboard, and the new press box and bleachers, are part of a \$2.4 million project approved by the board of education in late 2021.

The multi-purpose synthetic turf field includes a



AS THE DISTRICT waits for the turf repairs to get underway, construction of the new bleachers has already begun. The bleachers will have better accessibility. A new press box is also being added.

shock pad under the turf to meet the current safety standards set by the National Football League.

The improvements were

funded by a combination of money from the Capital Projects Fund as well as the Operations and Maintenance Fund, with no impact on taxpayers. Byrne & Jones Sports Construction is responsible for the field portion of the project.

Council

ities. It was really enlightening to go through the plant with the engineers, with [water plant operator Rob Grivetti], to physically see what these guys are doing day in and day out. They put a lot of effort into it, to make sure our toilets flush and our water is clean. I'd like to give them some credit."

Warren said he and other city officials have reviewed ongoing maintenance and future upgrades needed at the plant, as part of long term planning for viability. "We also are getting some bids on a new HVAC system for the lab and the plant," Wietting said. "In 2011, that system was put in, and it never functioned correctly. Sometimes they have too much condensation, the paperwork is actually wet inside the drawers, and the floors have puddles. We're getting people to come in there and look at it, but they've been unsuccessful in getting it to look the way it should."

Wietting said the staff has worked out a few temporary fixes, but the issue needs to be addressed for the long haul.

In other business before the full City Council on Feb. 14: • The council approved an ordinance authorizing the city to purchase radios and equipment from Motorola Solutions, to replace and update radios used by the Braidwood Police Department.

• City Clerk Hillary Bohac reported that the city had responded to several Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) information requests since the last regular meeting of the council.

Bohac said those requests were seeking information on contracts from Waste Management and Environmental Recycling, regarding the city's refuse collection contract. Other FOIAs included requests for certificates of publications on bids, as well as information on TIF reimbursements paid out over the past few years.

• Public Health and Safety Commissioner James Mikel said that during the first two weeks of the month, the Braidwood Police Department responded to 160 calls for service, resulting in 15 case reports written.

• Commissioner Doug Money expressed thanks to the Braidwood Police Department, following the arrest of a suspect in a car theft thanks to the city's Flock Safety cameras.

"I want to thank Chief Lyons for that, because he was the one who spearheaded getting the Flock cameras in town," Money said. "Normally when you see a car that's stolen in town, it's for nefarious purposes. But, the cameras worked the way they should, the officers were there to pick [the suspect] up before he was able to do whatever it was he intended to do. I just want to thank our police department for that."

• The council approved the payment of bills in the amount of \$209,081.

• The council approved the payroll in the amount of \$85.888.



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More flavors of the melting pot in Braidwood

We continue our look at the nationalities of early Braidwood, as documented by M. J. Donna in his book The Braidwood Story. Next on his list were the Canadians. Most prominent of while was the Jack family.

William Jack was born to English parents in Ontario, Canada to work in the mines, in 1856. In 1862 the family moved to Morris, Illinois and a few years later to Braidwood.

He attended Braidwood schools, then made up his mind to learn to be a tinner and was set to go to Chicago. His father, however, announced that he had just purchased a hardware store and William could learn the tinner's trade there, in a more old England was the William family famous.



Together with his brother, he operated a hardware store for the rest of his life

the English, to both in nationality the vicinity in

beginnings. So early in fact that there were no grocery stores in Braidwood, so Mary English would walk 5 miles to Wilmington and back to purchase food.

John worked in the mines for a few years, later opening up a tavern near the Eureka shaft. His home was located on the street named after his family, English Street.

Another family from jolly

practical setting. Maltby family. William started his mining career in England, but later moved around to Quebec, Canada, Jackson, Michigan, Peoria and Fairbury, Illinois, Pennsylvania and We move on finally Braidwood in 1866.

He became superintendent of the Eureka Coal and last name. Company that operated four The John English mines and laid out the Eureka family moved to section of Braidwood.

He later worked for other 1865, just when companies, finally purchasing Braidwood was at its very his own mines in the northeast part of the city. He was the founder of the Braidwood Public Library and served as its first president.

Another family Donna mentions under the heading of those born in England was the 'G-Shaft" Williamson's. Mr. Williamson was a hoisting engineer and served in several early mines among them the Ishaft and the G-shaft. It was his wife Harriet that made the which she named G-shaft after the mine closest to her home. Donna says that the candy was made after her death in 1914, by other members of her family, but it never tasted the same, so he assumes her recipe died with her. Since he had tasted both, I bow to him as judge.

Of course, the Irish, next on the list cannot be ignored. Donna mentions the William and Thomas Connor families, and the Higgins. The William Keevers family is probably the most famous, known for their "discovery" of coal on their farm in 1864.

The truth is, the existence of coal in the area was wellknown a long time before. He sunk a mine on his property and soon a small hamlet built up around it, known as Keeverville. When the mine gave out, Keeverville became a ghost town, with most of the houses moved to Diamond

She perfected a candy and other villages in the area. Donna mentions that many of the leaders of the Miner's Union were Irishmen from Braidwood, that would include James Ryan who was elected to the State Board of the Union, ending his career as an arbitrator for the U.M.W.A. and the Illinois Coal Operators' Association.

He was a warm friend of Union leaders such as John P. Mitchell (another Braidwood man) and John L. Lewis.

We move on to the Italians, starting with the Bertas. Donna describes them as the most prolific family among the early Italians.

More than a dozen different branches of the family settled in the Braidwood area in the 1870's and 80's. He says, 'In the early 80's families of that name came here in flocks, all adding materially to the development of the town."

James Berta set up a truck

garden business, starting with a few acres on the western side of the city, adding more to it every year, until he became the largest land owner within the city limits. Two of his sons followed him and were just as successful.

The Stephen Faletti family came to Braidwood in 1873. He worked for the mines for about ten years, then opened a drygoods and grocery store from 1883 to 1922.

He was considered a leader in the Italian community helping to arrange passage for new immigrants, and visits back home for those already settled here as the agent for the White Star Steamship Line, His wife also did her part by helping women adapt to the strange ways of their new country.

We will continue with Donna's inventory of nationalities when next we meet.

RCHS Theater heading "Into the Woods"



THE REED-CUSTER Theatre Department will present "Into the Woods," a Tony Award winning musical by Stephen Sondheim and book by James Lapine. The story brings together several Brothers Grimm fairytales—Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Little Red Riding Hood and Rapunzel-all tied together with a baker and his wife and a witch who casts a spell on them. The musical will be presented March 17 and 18 at 7 p.m. and 2 p.m. on March 19 in the Reed-Custer Auditorium, 249 Comet Dr. Admission is free, however attendees can pick their seats in advance by securing a ticket at vancoevents.com. The cast includes [from left, row one]: Matthias Martinez, Lucas Doolin, Mia Nacey, Lucy Esparza, Marshall Gee, Mollie Dockery, Charolette Barry and Katie Carson. Paige Holland is in row two with Olllivia Allen, Jadyn Stephens, Eden Przybulski, Victoria Loomis, Maria Bragg, Jaina Dubbert, Olivia Williams, Alice Gruber, Reese Damaschke and Dakota Wilkins. In row three are Gibson Waldvogel, Tristan Randall, Zach Randall, Mark Martinez, Ava Van Duyne, Jamon Spikings, Joey Ulrich and Colton Waldvogel. The cast is directed by James Reinbacher with vocal direction by Kevin Mangan and choreography by Kim Scerine. The musical pit is directed by Addie Dennis and is comprised of Tyler Wiyninger, Kaitlyn Faurot, Makayla Wilkins, Jenna Bragg, Emma O'Neill, Jack Krall, Julia Janopoulos, Gabby Davies, Micah Crisp, Danny Kuban and Landon Edwards.

RCHS seniors of the week

BY MACKENZIE ROMINES RCHS STUDENT REPORTER

Each week the Braidwood Journal features members from the Reed-Custer High School class of 2023. Featured this week are Angie Martinez and TJ Boyd who completed our questionnaire.

Angie Martinez

What do you plan to pursue upon graduation? Elementary Education at Eastern Illinois University

What is something most do not know about you? I cry a ton

What's an everyday activity you could win an medal Olympic at? Procrastinating

Favorite thing on the school menu? Chicken tacos or quesadilla

What is one thing you refuse to eat? Green beans, because they are soggy and gross

A sport or club that made an impact on you and *why*? Color Guard. I've been doing it forever and it's just something that I really love. I can't wait to do it in college

If you could travel anywhere, where would you go? Tokyo, Japan

What class would you create? How to pick your video game main 101

Famous Person (dead or alive) you would like to lackse pticeye, because he's like my hero Teacher shoutout? Mr. Gleixner, he just really cares and I actually love his class Advice you would give to underclassmen? Don't be mean people, because people never forget

ANGIE MARTINEZ



TJ BOYD

currently building a guitar in one of my classes

What's an every day activity you could win an Olympic medal at? I'm very good at stocking shelves

Favorite thing on the school menu? Chicken Alfredo

What is one thing you refuse to eat? Max sticks

A sport or club that made an impact on you and why? Basketball, it made me

more open and social If you could travel anv-

Budick's art places in Art 4 Heart contest

BY MACKENZIE ROMINES RCHS STUDENT REPORTER

This February marks the 12th year of the "Art 4 Heart: A Journey to a Healthy Heart through the Artist's Eye" exhibit hosted by Riverside Health Care, and curated by Christina Loraine. It coincides with American Heart month, focusing on cardiovascular health. The exhibit, hosted in Kankakee, displayed the art of students from local schools.

The event highlights the beauty in which the eye of an artist works, and has a heavy focus on the health of the heart for the pieces. Entries could be done in any medium, and both digital and traditional pieces were included.

Many Reed-Custer students had pieces selected to be displayed. The Braidwood students who participated were Braden Belcher, Haley Budick, Liliana Chavez, Gabby Davies, Margaret Dockery, Zoe Hasset, Savana Helton, Seth Johnson, Ethan Mann, Andrew Martinez, Echo Zeke Mudro, Dallas Mueller, Cooper Smith, Abigail Solis, Haley Sterrett, Abigail Sunday, Makenzi Thompson, Jaidan Wilbur, and Emma Whittum. The event was held Feb. 23, and was the 7th year that the school submitted work

Senior Haley Budick's stunning piece "From the ground up" won second place overall, and she was given a \$50 gift card as well. When asked for a statement about her piece, Budick said,

"I would like to say I am



REED-CUSTER art student Haley Budick (fourth from left) was first runner-up in the Riverside Healthcare 12th Annual Art 4 Heart contest featuring the work of 60 area high school students. Budick submitted a colored pencil piece titled "From the Ground Up" which took first runner-up among intricate drawings, painting, sculptures, photography and more submitted by students from nine area schools. Budick received her award Thursday at The Majestic Theater in Kankakee where nearly 200 students, teachers and community members attended a reception recognizing the works of high school students depicting the journey to a healthy heart through the artist's eye. Also pictured are (from left) Riverside Vice President of Public Relations and Communication - Matt McBurnie; Juror -Ann Wendlick; 2nd runner up Jolie Corral; Budick; grand prize winner Anna DuMontelle; and Curator - Christina Loraine.

beyond grateful for this oppor- online. I then added and The heart was created using tunity. Getting second place was very unexpected yet really appreciated."

Budick commented, "'From the ground up' was a piece I created from collaging a series of ideas that I found

changed aspects to make the piece my own, such as the flowers and the color scheme of the heart. I wanted to include flowers and plant life that could be seen around Braidwood, and add as many natural elements as possible.

colored pencils which took me roughly 15 hours total. I could not have created this without the help and support of my art teacher Miss Baron, and my parents for always cheering me on.'

TJ Boyd

What do you plan to pursue upon graduation? I'm planning on either going into the military or the union

What is something most do not know about you? I'm homework

where, where would you go Australia, it's a beautiful country

What class would you create? A class revolving around computers and how to make them better

Famous Person (dead or alive) you would like to meet? Jeffery Dean Morgan, he is such a nice guy and he is really good at acting

Teacher Shoutout? Mr. Smith

Advice you would give to underclassmen? Do your

RCMS students of the month



REED-CUSTER MIDDLE School named the students of the month for January. The characteristic was dedication, students include (from left): Kamryn Wilkey (7th grade), Kirstin Klein (8th), Kadance Van Duyne (7th), Reese Brown (8th), Colton Schultz (7th), Aiden Kerwin (8th), Johanna Janopoulos (6th), Jesse Tresouthick (8th), Isabella Dixon (6th), Isaac Knight (7th) and Caleb Cisco (6th). Not pictured: Aubree Bobzin (6th).

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Litter alert

DIAMOND-I can't help but notice the garbage that seems to be everywhere including bags of dog poop, construction materials, plastic bags up in the trees. I'm sure it's not just my subdivision but everybody's subdivision. No wonder our lakes, streams, rivers and oceans are in trouble. When was the last time you ever heard of someone getting a ticket for littering because these people litter when nobody's looking. Is it mental health? Is it education? Or is it just pure ignorance? Take a drive down Route 113, Coal City Road or Interstate 55 you see litter everywhere. It's the same thing year after year. You'll even see mattresses dumped by the side of the road. I think these people need to smack themselves on the side of the head and realize what they're doing to the environment I see it on the golf courses people throw their garbage and beer cans into the woods when there's trash cans available at every tee off. It just drives me crazy. It's a no-brainer people, be responsible and show a good example for your friends and your kids.

Rossi Field

BRAIDWOOD-There is little known about the history about the vacant lot or why it came known as Rossi Field. Extremely hard to believe. This is a civic society, "written word" and it's governmental agencies. I am in my 70's. As a child we played grass-lot football in that field. Even one of the kids' older brother was a Braidwood policeman. The Reed-Custer High School had a huge field behind the high school. I don't know why the high school would have practiced at Rossi's field or even when. Perhaps when I was in Vietnam. So much little or less can I accept the word folklore except if it was led into a reference for fishing guide in a strip mine pit.

Bird flu outbreak

MORRIS—A nasty strain of H5N, virus currently causing the worst outbreak of disease among birds, was first identified in China in 1996 across America. 58 million chickens and turkeys have been killed to prevent its spread. Similar die-offs in poultry farms in Europe and Japan, one of the main reasons that eggs are so expensive lately. Good news: No record of any human getting infected with bird flu from eating eggs or poultry products.

Get out and vote

COAL CITY-Yeah, I just have a really big problem with the Coal City Area Club. There is a person on the committee that is not even a member of this club? That does not make any sense. Not at all. So you're letting a non member help run this club? They need to do something. People out there that are members of this club need to get out and vote and get on the board. This board we have is going to be the ruining of the club. Let's get our heads out of our butts. We're all nuts for letting these people run this club.

Gifting \$millions

MORRIS—President Biden made a sur-prise visit recently to Ukraine gifting another \$500 million. Plus recently gifted \$400 million worth of American made tanks. How much have the Europeon countries donated to the Russia-Ukraine War? Keep paying your taxes!

Nasty politics Pennsylvania's Democrat Senator Fetterman ran in the last election against Republican Dr. Oz for Senate. Senator Fetterman won. Democrats continue to be in

ize is that since the dealerships will only comprise less than 20 acres, the remainder of the taxpayer improved property can be sold by the dealers and they get to keep the proceeds. You read that right. They get to make a huge capital gain profit on real estate that taxpayers paid for and taxpayers improved. These are not, as another Sound off article stated "false insinuations". These are facts put out by the council itself, only without their spin.

...pants on fire

SHADOW LAKES—When I was in grade school there was a phrase that we used to describe people and I think this phrase definitely fits the public servants in Washington, D.C. since they only know how to live off the taxpayers' funds and do nothing but tell the American citizens not to complain because things are just fine and not to worry the government will help you anytime if the American citizens have problems. So this phrase fits every aspect of the Democratic party and it is doubtful they will be able to understand this phrase in their brains. "Liar, Liar pants on fire."

Right to know

DIAMOND—The time has arrived for all the public servants in Washington, D.C. must produce a complete list of their assets. But the public servants will try to prevent the American citizens from seeing their assets by saying that their finances are none of the public's business. While public servants destroy the finances of the American citizen, fill their bank accounts with high salaries and pensions, they push the agenda that Americans should just shut up and obey. So any public servant that does not honor the laws of U.S.A. and legal rights of every American citizen should be put behind bars for treason without delays. Since some public servants only know that the American citizen should not have anything to say about what they do. Dictatorship is not freedom.

What a change

BRAIDWOOD—Yes, it is election time again and I have been here for many administrations. I have to say the last four years have been the easiest and most relaxing one by far. I have seen pleasant mood change of those in city offices. I am extremely happy we are once again running a positive budget instead of in the red. So a big pat on the back to the council members for that, and most important to me is our first responders. I regularly run into members of the fire department, extremely friendly and helpful people and our police department. Wow, what a change. I actually know most of them and will strike a little conversation instead of avoiding them, and everything done without helicopters and turning Braidwood into Chi-raq.

Doing a proper job

BRAIDWOOD-To last week's "only one concern," I'm just curious what is it that city administrator Tony Altiery didn't do for you? Is it he didn't smile enough for you? Is that he took this city by the horns and wrestled in new business with a vengeance and helped demo the previous administration's many million dollar debt back to a positive amount? He's done an amazing job. I could care less if he ever cracks a smile.

Fashion police

WILMINGTON-Marjorie Taylor Greene recently criticized Ukraine President Zelenskyy for not wearing a tie when meeting with President Biden. Having seen how Greene dresses, she is in no position to be the fashion police.



previously served as a policy advisor to the Illinois Governor and worked at the Illinois Policy Institute as a local government transparency and anti-corruptions expert. Regarding the Bears he stated "If they have a viable project, they shouldn't need tax subsidies. They are saying one of two things: 1. They need tax subsidies because their project is fundamentally bankrupt or 2. They're just trying to pad their profit." He might as well have been talking about the Braidwood Council giving away the store to the car dealerships. Maybe Mr. Altiery and his group should have talked to Mr. Costin before they gave away my hard earned tax money.

Creative bookkeeping

BRAIDWOOD-I was in a nearby restaurant recently and was sitting near a Braidwood official. I couldn't help but overhear him tell those at his table that Braidwood "passed" their audit. I knew that could not be true because in the accounting profession there is no such thing as "passing" or "failing" an audit. Those are not generally accepted accounting terms. Rather, an audit is either "unqualified" or "qualified." An unqualified audit report is one that concludes that the financial statements of the city fairly present its affairs in all material aspects. A qualified report is one in which there is an issue regarding the application, acceptability, or adequacy of the accounting policies. Braidwood's audit report was qualified. For auditors, accounting irregularities must be material or financially worth consideration to qualify a report. The audio of the meeting is very poor so I'm not sure of the severity of the problem. But one thing did clearly come across. The problem has been ongoing for several years and it has yet to be fixed. And this is the city council that borrowed almost \$2 million on the backs of us taxpayers so they could literally give it away to two businesses. And that doesn't include almost \$5 million more of taxpayer dollars to improve what they already gave away. The next time you hear one of them talk about how much money Braidwood will be making on the deal, keep their creative book-

Sharon, I congratulate you for your efforts in helping your students become good writers. I taught at the high school and college levels for more than three decades and won awards for both my teaching and writing so I do not need lectures from you. You asked me to explain why I am a proud Democrat and I am happy to comply. The Democrats have promoted many laws and programs that have improved our country. When Democrat Franklin Roosevelt was president laws were passed ending child labor and encouraging union growth. Laws were also passed implementing minimum wage, the 40-hour work week and overtime pay. Social Security, the most important program created in the 20th century, came into existent under the Democrats. These changes allowed the working people to join the middle class and all the people to retire with dignity. Of course the right wingers opposed Social Security and called it communism. That should sound familiar if you read sound-off regularly. The GI bill was also passed under the Democrats helping veterans returning from World War II and all the wars since. You may remember how Democratic President Kennedy used diplomacy and avoided a World War but made the Russians remove their missiles from Cuba in 1962. Contrast this with the Republican president named Bush who lied to the world and sent our troops into war to find weapons that never existed. Medicare became law under President Johnson, another Democrat, though his opponents denounced it as socialism. The Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts were also enacted under Johnson though both are under attack from Republicans today. You may have heard of Pell Grants which are named for a Democratic Senator and help working class students pay for college. President Obama extended Healthcare to millions with the Affordable Care Act which Trump promised to replace but failed. I am in my 80th year on earth and under President Biden we have the lowest unemployment since I was a senior in high school. Everyone who wants a job is working and wages are going up. As a person who grew up during the Cold War I am proud that we have a president who will stand up to Putin and Russian aggression unlike his predecessor who groveled at the feet of the ruthless murderer of Ukrainian children. I am proud of our Democratic Governor who has straightened out the states finances so that the state is paying its bills on time. But now Sharon, as you enjoy your Social Security and Medicare I have an assignment for you. Please explain what woke means. All the Right Wingers blab about it but nobody knows what it is. Also define deep state and what is the great reset? Also tell me why Republicans do not want students to learn American History and why are they always attacking schools and educators like us? And if you want a good grade make sure your response is well written since my red pen is nearly out of ink.

charge of the Senate as a result. Senator Fetterman had been a recent stroke victim running in that highly emotional election. Shame on his doctor who claimed he was OK. Shame on President Biden and President Obama for all the fanfare. Senator Fetterman has been hospitalized twice since taking office presently for severe depression.

Young cop

WILMINGTON-On Thursday the 23rd I had an issue at my house. I had to call the police department non emergency number. Within a few minutes a very kind young man came over. I wish I could remember his last name so I could thank him more properly. He was very kind, courteous and professional. He introduced himself to me, shook my hand and asked if he could enter my house which I thought was very professional. The way he was dressed he could've made an extra on Chicago PD for sure. He looked very professional in his uniform. He addressed the issues that I called about and helped me out and then before he left he asked if he had addressed my concerns which he obviously did and then he asked if I had any other problems, issues or concerns that he could assist me with while he was there and obviously I didn't. I know that a lot of police officers in Wilmington are at the age where they are starting to retire and that breaks my heart to see them leaving. But it also brings me hope and comfort knowing that the city is hiring outstanding young men like the officer who came to my house. I have hope and comfort that we will have outstanding young men to serve and protect our community for many years. Thank you again for your service to Wilmington and to the citizens. Sheri Michaels

With our tax dollars

BRAIDWOOD-In the last Free Press an obvious supporter of the present administration said, "The current administration purchased 66 acres for \$1.8 million with two guaranteed businesses that is costing the taxpayers nothing." Giving the acreage away while we taxpayers are stuck paying off millions in bond payments is not exactly what I would call "costing the taxpayers nothing." We will be paying for that for many years to come. And don't forget that property taxes will be rebated to the business for 10 years, 55 percent of the sales taxes will be rebated, there will be no permit fees or construction fees and there are also a myriad of other taxpayer losses. And don't forget that almost \$5 million of improvements to the property will be paid for by us through TIF. And in case you didn't know, the "T" in TIF stands for "tax", as in my tax money and your tax money. And what many don't seem to real-

Let me know

BRAIDWOOD-In response to "Too early for me," if you let me know where you live I will leave my route to pick up your garbage for your convenience at 7 a.m. Maybe you can have coffee for me.

Talk is cheap

COAL CITY-Over 60 years ago, in the Navy, it was easy for us to solve the problems of the world. Then, a kid would always add his two cents to the conversation by saying 'Talk is cheap.' We have changed a lot for the better in 60 years but I think of him often when I read Sound-off or hear the news today. Now many people only have gripes with no solutions to their complaints as if it is up to others to do the hard work they are unwilling to do. Cars should drive themselves, artificial intelligence must solve all our problems and moving to Mars is preferable to fixing this planet. What stupidity. Are people really buying into all this baloney? It is time to be self sufficient whenever you can. The USA has become a lot better in the last 60 vears that I know of and if you don't think so tell me where else you would have the freedoms that we enjoy. They are worth keeping. The kids are the future and they deserve better than they are getting. Talk is cheap so quit complaining and start being a part of fixing today's faults. Homeless people camped on public property should have a way out of why they are there, except jail. Single mothers need improved treatment. Politics and education are on the rocks and need citizen input bad. Live responsibly. One's liberty should never be an excuse for the irresponsibility of not following the rule of law. Don't sell yourself short as it is often the little guy who solves problems for the big shots who cannot see what is right in front of their nose. Your idea may be the right answer that no one else has thought of yet.

Herman

Compared to the Bears

BRAIDWOOD—Those of you who are football fans like myself may be following the Chicago Bears' possible move to Arlington Heights in a new stadium located where the Arlington racetrack is. Their request, or is it a demand, that the new stadium be funded in part with taxpayer dollars has raised quite an uproar. While the dollar amounts are certainly different, the policy is exactly the same as Braidwood subsidizing car dealers with our tax dollars. I recently came across a statement by Brian Costin, the deputy director of Illinois' watchdog group Americans for Prosperity. He

BRAIDWOOD-Most of the sound-off negative articles are about Braidwood Mayor and council. It seems to be a nice town with the most beautiful near brand new school buildings for all levels thanking ComEd contributions and a state of the art Fire Department, also with ComEd's donations. Nice town to raise a young family in we would think. Every small town across our country is still suffering since the lockdown Covid virus and businesses shut down or left. You're safe in a small town. If you're so miserably unhappy, just move.

Loss of Medicaid

MORRIS-As many as 700,000 Illinoisans may stand to lose their Medicaid coverage after March 31. The Department of Healthcare and Family Services is working to reduce that number and help those affected find health insurance elsewhere. Medicaid is a health insurance program for poor and disabled people that is ointly funded by the federal government and the states. The Democrat Congress in December passed a spending bill that put an end to a pandemic era rule that sent billions of additional dollars to states if they agreed to keep Medicaid patients enrolled during the public health emergency without having to go through the normal reapplication process. The change means many who have been receiving Medicaid coverage throughout the pandemic will have to reapply for benefits leading to loss of coverage if the individual would no longer qualify for benefits or if they fail to complete reapplication. Nationwide, the federal government estimates that 15 million will lose their coverage. Illinois estimates 384,000 will lose coverage and advise Medicaid enrollees should fill out renewal forms as soon as possible in April. During the pandemic Medicaid enrollment in Illinois grew by one million enrollees during that period to 3.9 million. Our state also received \$3 billion in addition in federal funding to pay for it. Now the fun starts knowing over one million illegals are being cared for free and being handed monies. Thanks Joe and Kamala.

Marijuana edibles

The number of young kids, especially toddlers, who accidentally ate marijuana-laced treats has risen sharply over five years as pot became legal in more places in the US, according to a pediatric journal. More than 7,000 confirmed cases of kids younger than 6 eating marijuana edibles were reported to the nation's poison control centers between 2017 and 2021, climbing from about 200 to more than 3,000 per year. Nearly a quarter of the children wound up hospitalized, some seriously ill.

A proud Democrat

No forgetting WILMINGTON—Here are some fun facts I read in the Chicago Sun Times: Florida has a higher crime rate than Illinois. Gun confiscation in American airports has hit a record high. Third, the number one excuse of the gun owners is they forgot they had the guns. New rule: If you don't know where your gun is you don't get to own one.

Penny Lane

Truth be told

DIAMOND-I speak boldly to you because we have a twofold crisis on our hands. A very small group of radicals are trying to force the rest of us to go along with their insane and immoral agenda. While the vast majority of us who disagree with their godless agenda are silent. The result is an upside down world where you can feel the evil all around us. Liberals screaming for the right to abort their own children. Every day school teachers pushing sex lesson on children as young as K through second grade and our boys are encouraged to be girls. Things can seem pretty bleak during difficult times. Just like you, I turn to the Lord and seek His plan. I hope you realize you are not old fashioned for thinking self control, temperance, modesty and virtue are good things. You are not crazy for believing children do best with a mother and father in the home. I really want you to know you are not alone in your beliefs. You are part of a remnant of believers who have been faithful to God and His word for hundreds and hundreds of years. The deceivers on the left want you to think that you are an outlier while painting their radical and immoral ideas as "normal." But here's the truth. Eight out of 10 Americans still believe in God and the Bible continues to be the world's best selling book of all time. "The light shines in the darkness, and darkness has not overcome it." John chapter 1, verse 5. Amen

Sharon

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your Azalea will be subpar.

Dole Unsweetened Pineapple

juice is the choice of most

commercial bars because it is a

usually around a teaspoon. It

largely depends on the type of

grenadine used and the

desired color of vour Azalea. If

you look at pictures of Azalea

cocktails online you will see a

wide variety of reddish colors

ranging from light pink to deep

light red/pink cocktail, the

deeper colored offerings from

Sonoma Syrup co and Monin

will darken the drink and bring

some pomegranate notes to

shaker and served over ice in a

1 oz. fresh lemon juice

Splash of grenadine, add

Shake and strain into

Garnish with orange

Combine in shaker:

2 oz pineapple juíce

until desired color is achieved

chilled Collins glass over fresh

2 oz. vodka (or gin)

Add ice to shaker

chilled Collins (tall) glass.

The Azalea is built in a

the Azalea as well.

The bright red syrupy grenadine (Rose's) will yield a

The "splash" of grenadine

dynamite mixer.

burgundy.

Enjoy the PGA sipping on an Azalea

The 2023 PGA Tour is in offering full swing, and we are mere weeks away from the Masters followed pro golf at Augusta National set to tee over the last few off in April 6. The big story of years, or even if last year's Masters was the return of the crowd after a two year absence.

Aside from the roar of the crowd, Scottie Scheffler's performance was the stuff of legend and I look forward to reliving the magic in the highlight reel ahead of this year's Tournament. Azaleas will bloom, pimento cheese sandwiches will be served, but this year the official cocktail of the Masters will be part refreshment, and perhaps part peace

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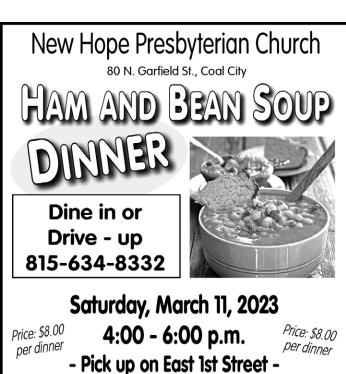
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If you have you have not, you may have heard of LIV, a rival professional golf tour financed by a Saudi

top talent defected from the PGA tour to join LIV includ-

Koepka, and Dustin Johnson.

which player will be regarded as the "best" pro golfer?

to objectively answer the question, but this year's Masters tournament will surely spark plenty of spirited debate among fans.

players to attend majors, and the Masters will be the first time this season that golfers from the two rival tours will tee up alongside each other. LIV golfers recently received clearance to enter the Masters, and 17 of the upstart tour players were invited to play Augusta National in April.

At the end of the day, no game.

The Masters is an "invitation only" tournament, and



Brian Rung

plav Augusta National next month, I'll be happy

As long as the

best players in the

game show up to

That's enough controversy, let's pour the official cocktail of the Masters, the Azalea.

Why is the Azalea cocktail the official cocktail of the Masters? The Azalea cocktail is named for the iconic pink azalea's that line the #13 fairway, and the azaleas are the only things "pretty" about that particular hole if you are playing the course against the top players in the world. Augusta's 13th hole is a par 5, 510-yard hole that is regarded by many as one of the most difficult in the game.

It's unlikely that I will ever play Augusta National, but there's a good chance that each and every spring I will enjoy a delicious Ázalea while taking in the action from my

living room. Augusta National is home pineapple juice is subpar, then

the issue is further to over 30 varieties of azaleas, and they all seem to be in peak complicated by six LIV players that form around Tournament time. What is the best way to lifetime exemptions into get the Azalea cocktail in the glass in peak form? Masters as past champions, Before you prepare your listed in the recipe below is

Azalea, you have a big decision to make: vodka or gin?

The drink was originally made with gin, which is the preferred spirit of golf club bars around the world. I'm not sure why that is, but it is. If you prefer vodka, go ahead and use vodka. A quality gin will lend a unique blend of herbs and botanicals to the drink for more depth, whereas vodka will keep the sweet and sour fruit flavors in-tact without overpowering the drink.

This is a great "first" cocktail if you are new to mixology as it is made from common ingredients, and if you keep the proportions listed below in the ballpark the drink will be delicious.

Many fans of the Azalea like to go a bit heavy on the fresh lemon juice, while some prefer to skip lemon juice altogether in favor of fresh lime juice. Lemon juice is most commonly used when the drink is served in a commercial bar, I make a few of these a year at home and prefer lime iuice.

wedge and cherry Until next week, enjoy Use a quality pineapple responsibly. juice. At 2 oz. per drink, if your

ice

State of Illinois earns credit upgrade

BY PETER HANCOCK CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD - S&P Global Ratings announced Feb. 23 that it raised Illinois' long-term credit rating to A-, up from BBB+, marking the seventh upgrade the state has received from a major rating agency in less than two years.

The rating applies to roughly \$27.7 billion in outstanding general obligation, or GO bonds.

The upgrade on the GO debt reflects our view that Illinois' commitment and execution to strengthen its budgetary flexibility and stability, supported by accelerating repayment of its liabilities, rebuilding its budget stabilization fund to decade highs; and a slowing of statutory pension funding growth, will likely continue during the outlook period," S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Geoff Buswick said in a news release.

Bonds are a tool that governments and businesses use to borrow money, typically for long-term capital projects such as building construction or other kinds of infrastructure. GO bonds are backed by the government's general taxing authority but other bonds may be backed by more specific revenue sources, such as sales or motor fuel taxes. Higher bond ratings the state - pays lower interest rates.

Before the recent string of upgrades, all three major rating agencies - including Moody's Investors Service and Fitch Ratings - had rated Illinois' bonds at one notch above "junk" status, the point at which large institutional investors will no longer purchase them.

During the last two years, however, Illinois has used higher-than-expected revenues to pay off its backlog of past-due bills and retire other short-term debt early. In addition, it has set aside \$1.9 billion for the state's budget stabilization fund - commonly known as the "rainy day" fund – and the state is projected to deposit another \$138 million into that fund in the upcoming fiscal year, according to Gov. JB Pritzker's latest budget proposal.

"Our continued fiscal responsibility and smart budgeting will save Illinois taxpayers millions from adjusted interest rates, and my partners in the General Assembly and I look forward to building on that success," Pritzker said.

S&P credited the state's "deep and diverse economic base" as well as the state government's access to readily available cash, including the rainy day fund and untapped interfund borrowing authority. The agency also said it expects generally mean the borrower – in this case ongoing union contract negotiations to sales tax bonds to A, up from A-.

be settled in a timely manner.

Offsetting those factors, S&P said, is the state's high unfunded pension and other postemployment benefit liabilities such as health care. The agency also dinged Illinois on its practice of releasing annual financial audits later than most other states and population declines, which it warned could impact future economic growth.

S&P said it could further upgrade Illinois' rating if the state continues paying down unfunded pension liabilities and building up its rainy day fund while shrinking its structural deficit.

On the other hand, S&P said it could downgrade the state's rating in the future if the structural deficit were to increase due to economic uncertainties or if its pension and other fixed-cost obligations exceed expectations.

Pritzker's recent budget proposal seeks to add an extra \$200 million to the pension fund beyond statutory levels for the current fiscal year.

For now, S&P said the state's nearterm credit outlook is "stable."

In addition to upgrading the state's general obligation bond rating, S&P also raised its rating on the state's Build Illinois

Spring cleanup

by a Arabian investment fund. Some of the PGA's ing Phil Mickelson, Brooks

With two rival pro tours,

We may never find a way

The PGA is allowing LIV

single player is bigger than the

Includes: soup, coleslaw, corn bread, beverage and dessert.

State Police squad car rear-ended on I-55

and his K9 companion to the stationary emergency serious injury escaped Monday morning after their squad car was struck on Interstate 55 in Joliet.

The officer was investigating a previous crash on the right shoulder of Interstate 55 northbound at Illinois Route 59, with emergency lights activated, when it was rear ended at approximately 7:46 a.m.

A silver 2018 Nissan Altima, traveling northbound

An Illinois State Trooper on Interstate 55, failed to yield lic of the requirements of the vehicle and struck the left rear side of the ISP squad car.

> The Trooper and K9 were inside the vehicle at the time of the crash. The Trooped was transported to an area hospital non-life-threatening with injuries. The K9 was uninjured.

> The driver of the Nissan, Tanner R. Poppenhager, 24, of Beardstown, IL, was issued a citation for: Scott's Law – Failure To Yield To Stationary **Emergency Vehicle.**

This is the sixth Move Over Law crash so far this year. In 2022, ISP had 23 Move Over Law-related crashes where eight Troopers sustained injuries.

ISP is reminding the pub-

Speedway Solar project coming

ComEd has announced the opening of the 75th community solar development in its service territory, a 2.495 megawatt (MW) dubbed the Speedway Solar project.

The project will provide more than 350 ComEd customers with the benefits of solar energy and savings on their energy bills.The Speedway Solar project includes more than 2,300 solar panels and occupies 31 acres on West Sharp Road in Elwood.

By the end of this year, ComEd expects to have doubled the number of community solar projects interconnected to its electric grid to more than 150, serving approximately 36,000 customers!

Move Over Law, otherwise known as "Scott's Law".

When approaching an emergency vehicle, or any vehicle with their emergency or hazard lights activated, drivers are required to slow down and move over. A person who violates Scott's Law, commits a business offense and faces a fine of no less than \$250 or more than \$10,000 for a first offense.

at Braceville Gardner Cemetery

All grave decorations must be removed by March 15 or they will be discarded. Also, during the year, all wilted, faded and broken grave decorations will be removed. Garbage will be placed in containers located next to maintenance building.

Please do not replace decorations until the cleanup is completed.

Braceville Gardner Cemetery Association Board of Directors

2023 12U Wilmington Wildcats

EUCHRE

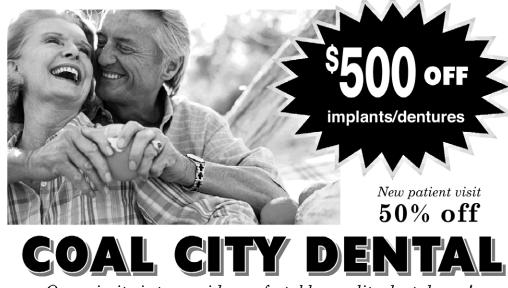
NIGHT

Saturday, March 11

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TICKETS: TJ Hansen 815-325-8631 Any 12U Wildcat Family Tuffy's Lounge

Lynx, porcupine featured in Mammal Madness

Celebrate the warmblooded creatures around us during a Mammal Madness program from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, March 4, at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

One of the highlights of this Forest Preserve District of Will County program will be a free, all-ages live animal presentation at 11 a.m. by Big Run Wolf Ranch. The presentation will feature a Canada lynx, opossum, skunk and porcupine. There is room for 200 and seating will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

"Mammals are relatable, and they play such a large role in our native ecosystem that we should celebrate them as much as possible," said Jess McQuown, a program coordi-nator at Four Rivers. "We're all taught about dolphins in the oceans and elephants in Africa, but we have some incredible mammals right here in our own backyards and we wanted to share our excitement with everyone."

The big draw for the animal show will be the Canada lynx, said Alexis Lyons, an interpretive naturalist at Four Rivers.

"The Canada Lynx is a wild cat with large paws and long ear tufts," Lyons said. "They're about the size of a medium dog, standing 2.5 feet tall. We



A CANADA LYNX and three other mammals will be part of a presentation made by Big Run Wolf Ranch at the Forest Preserve District of Will County's Mammal Madness program on March 4 at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

are very thrilled to have this the insects and rodents that majestic animal visiting Four **Rivers!**

Some of the animals that presentation have bad reputations, Lyons said.

'For instance, skunks have gotten a bad reputation from the foul-smelling musk they spray when frightened," she said. "Skunks provide many warning signs prior to spraying such as, hissing, raising its tail, puffing its fur and stamping its stage for families to bring their front feet. Skunks are generally quite easy-going and benefit There will be a show-and-tell our neighborhoods by eating

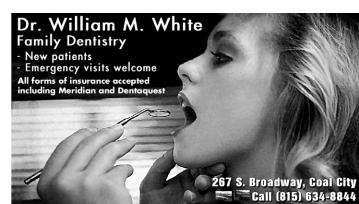
get into our homes and gardens.

In addition to the presenwill be featured during the tation by Big Run Wolf Ranch, which is a non-profit wildlife education facility in Homer Township, the event will feaother family-friendly ture activities.

> "After the presentation, there will be mask-making in the craft room," McQuown said. "We'll have a puppet own mammal stories to life space where families can

touch mammal pelts and bones. They also will be able to test their skills against the skills of some local mammals in an Animal Olympics arena."

Four Rivers Education Environmental Center is located at 25055 W. Walnut Lane, off of Blackberry Lane south of Bridge Street. For more information on the Forest Preserve District of Will County, visit ReconnectWithNature.org.





One day conference to address river issues

Organizers of the Kankakee River Watershed Conference said the time is now to restore the pristine waterway

"Sand and sediment flow into the river are being caught by fallen trees forming sand bars, turning sand bars into islands and redirecting the flow of water" say conference organizers Frank Koehler, for-Wilmington City mer Administrator, and Angel Crawford. "The time is now to address these challenges and protect the areas' greatest asset—the Kankakee River Watershed.'

With the theme "The Time is Now", a one-day conference on the Kankakee River will be held on Friday, March 10, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the campus of Kankakee

Community College.

Issues that will be discussed include water quantity and quality, biodiversity, nutrients and agriculture, river recreation, watershed initiatives, and most importantly, sand and sediment.

There is no fee to attend, but individuals are asked to register online. Lunch and refreshments will be provided to attendees.

Registration and conference schedule are available at Kankakee Community College 's Continuing Education. Course Detail: LECT-7045 -Kankakee River Watershed Conference.

The conference should be of interest to residents of Illinois and Indiana, particularly those in the Kankakee River, Iroquois River, and

Wilmington City Administrator Jeannine Smith

Yellow River watersheds.

will give a presentation on local initiatives and members of the Will County Forest Preserve District will be presenting on sand and sediment projects.

For more information, email Koehler through the Potawatomi Paddlers Association Fjkoehler1952 @gmail.com or Crawford from Iroquois Economic the Development Association at iedaillinois@gmail.vcom

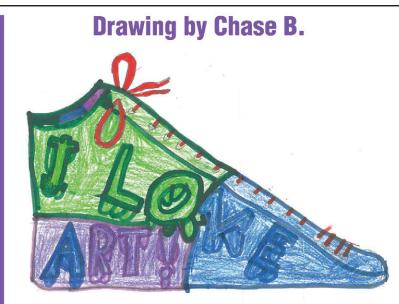
Annual FUMC Men's Club spaghetti dinner March 4

The Men's Club of the United Methodist Church of Wilmington will be hosting its 37th annual spaghetti dinner on Saturday,

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

Sponsored by Tymshoe Arto The

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



Help us express kindness! Create!

upcoming book sale

Library collecting

used items for

Library District will be holding a used book sale during the weekend of March 25 and March 26. The sale will run for books free of mold, dirt, from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Saturday and from 12 p.m. until 4 p.m. on Sunday.

bag, and the library will provide the bag. Donations of accepted.

The Wilmington Public books and DVDs for the book sale will be accepted now through March 24.

The library kindly asked and smoke damage. NO encyclopedias, VHS, National Geographics, outdated med-Books will be sold for \$3 a ical & text books or other obsolete materials will be

March 4, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the church located at 401 E. Kahler Road, Wilmington.

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

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



Headliner

Fritz Nothnagel

Saturday, March 4



Time... 8:03pm



MC/Host Bill Brady



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

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> **Guest Comic Ree Ledbetter**

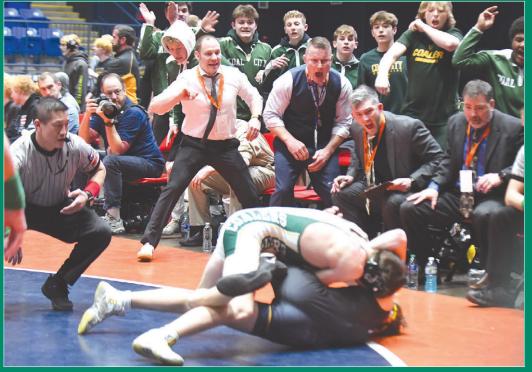




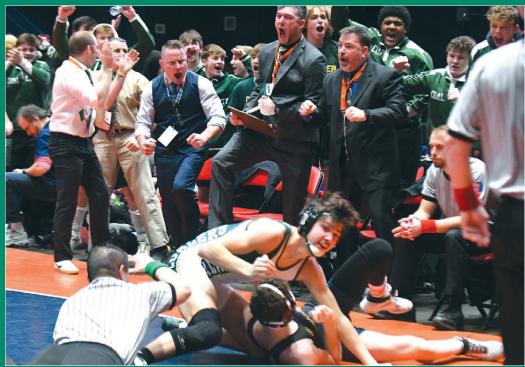
THE COAL CITY wrestling team is pictured Saturday in Bloomington in front of Coaler fans after winning the school's first ever 1st place dual team state trophy. The Coalers defeated Yorkville Christian 32-21 to win the championship.



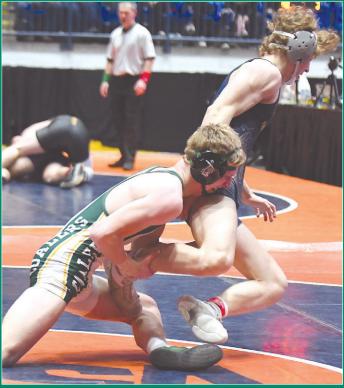




AN EXCITING START - The first match of the battle for first place resulted in a 4-0 win for Coal City's Brock Finch at 126 pounds. He scores a two-point takedown over Yorkville Christian's Tristan Gleason, much to the delight of his coaches and teammates.



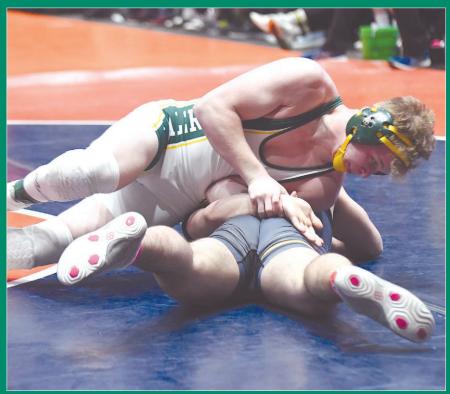
WHAT A BLESSING...as in Mataeo Blessing, who came out and pinned his opponent in :52 seconds to give the Coalers six big points over Yorkville Christian on Saturday. The Coal City senior won all three of his matches during the state dual finals, one of five Coalers to do so. Gotta love the reaction by coaches Joe Widlowski, Jim Looper and Mark Masters.



COAL CITY SENIOR Jack Poyner trips up Yorkville Christian's Tyler Martinez at 160 pounds.



JUST FOR YOU MOM! Coal City senior Derek Carlson points to the stands inside Grossinger Auto Arena in Bloomington, IL after singing the National Anthem to start the Dual Team wrestling championships.



COAL CITY SENIOR Braiden Young works on Mustang Jeremy Loomis during a 16-8 major decision at 182 pounds.



Lil Coalers Wrestling Club	97 N. 1st Ave., Coal City 815-634-8511	692 E. Division St., Coal City	
		Congratulations Coalers	Droud of our Cooloral
Noah Houston, we are so proud of you! Congrats to the Coalers on Team State. Love, Mom, Devon and Ava	Bolandos Furniture & Appliances 140 S. Broadway, Coal City 815-634-2312 www.rolandosfurniture.com	on the first ever Team state Title. Congrats Jacob Piatak on your individual 6th place finish. What an ending! Vince, Gina and Jason Joey	Proud of our Coalers! Village of Coal City
Congratulations Wrestlers and Coaches on an amazing and most memorable season. Clinton & Gretchen Poyner	Congratulations Coal City Wrestlers! Friends of David A. Spesia for Mayor	VERONDA Plumbing & Heating Coal City • (815) 634-8200 Lic. # 058-116831	Congratulations to the 2023 IHSA 1st time State Wrestling Champions! Previously the 2019 IESA State Champs. Way to go OG's! Widlowski family
Way to go Coaler Wrestlers! Tim Bradley, Coal City Trustee	1105 S. Water St., Wilmington 237 N. Front St., Braidwood 1025 E. Division St., Coal City 361 S. Locust St., Manteno 210 S. State St., Manteno 210 S. State St., Manteno 210 S. State St., Manteno 210 S. State St., New Lenox	Congratulations Aidan Kenney and all the Coal City Wrestlers on your State Championship. Nonny and Poppy Vitko	GYMNASTICS Calibur 555 S Kankakee St. • Coal City 815-634-8698 www.gymnasticsx-calibur.com
Congratulations Braiden and all the Coal City wrestlers and coaches on your State Championship. Love, Gramps & Grandma Hamilton	271 S. Broadway, Coal City 815-634-0315	ATTENTION C Look in next week's p 2023 State Champions Only pre-orders will be cost of shipping. Size v	aper for ordering the ship Coal City poster. e taken to save on the

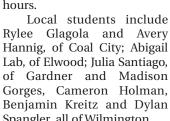
www.freepressnewspapers.com

Gramps & Grandma Hamilton

quality cover stock. More details coming

USF spring dean's list

The University of St. Francis (USF) congratulates the following students who have been named to the dean's list for the spring 2022 semester. Students who have attained a grade point average of 3.5 or higher at the end of a semester in which they have Benjamin Kreitz and Dylan taken at least twelve credit Spangler, all of Wilmington.



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The importance of the sea turtle and what we can do to help them

Dear EarthTalk: How are populations of sea turtles faring these days? -- A.J., Los Angeles, CA

Swimming alongside a sea turtle in coastal waters is certainly a thrilling sensation, but the experience is becoming increasingly harder to come by.

Declines in sea turtle populations around the world and in U.S. waters over recent decades is a sad reminder of all the environmental offenses that contribute to making the world's oceans less hospitable to these majestic, iconic reptiles.

Researchers estimate that since the dawn of the Industrial Age in the early 20th century, global sea turtle populations have decreased





AR1 Questions & Answers About Our Environment

by as much as two-thirds overall

These days only about 6.5 million sea turtles roam the world's subtropical and tropical coastlines. Indeed, sea turtle populations are on the ropes:

Three out of the world's seven sea turtle species are considered "critically endangered" by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN); green sea turtle numbers have fallen by some 90 percent while Leatherbacks have lost 40 percent of their population.

Strict conservation measures are needed if we are to save these species outright. But why even care about the turtles? They might seem like any other sea creature, but they are actually vital to maintaining a balanced environment

Turtle's graze on seagrass meadows to regulate their growth and prevent them from suffocating. Unhatched eggs are also a vital source of nutrients to sand dunes, which allow vegetation to grow. So, if our turtle populations become too low, it will cause a chain reaction within the whole shoreline ecosystem.

Unfortunately, populations of sea turtles face myriad threats. For starters, sea turtles often mistake plastic bags for jellyfish, one of their favorite delicacies.

But this plastic can get stuck in the turtle's stomach, imitating their sensation of being full which causes them to not eat any actual food.

today.

SINCE THE DAWN of the Industrial Age, global sea turtle popula-

tions have decreased by 2/3, with only 6.5 million sea turtles left

Researchers estimate some 52 percent of turtles have eaten some type of plastic.

With sea level rises, many beaches and even smaller barrier islands are disappearing. Turtles therefore become confused as to where to lay their eggs, potentially making it so that they don't lay any.

In addition, as reptiles, the gender of their hatchlings relies on temperature. Higher equals females, and lower equals males.

With global warming, beaches are warming up, drastically altering male/female balance. This could potentially affect the breeding success of turtles, and contribute to the decline as well.

The federal Endangered Species Act already protects turtles by making it illegal to harm them in any way, and

provides resources to combat endangerment.

Environmentalists have also created new programs like the State of the World's Sea Turtles and the IUCN Turtle Specialist group which examine risk factors, data and potential conservation efforts.

Additionally, many volunteers come together during nesting and hatching season to protect and guide turtles.

And their efforts have not one to waste; Leatherback turtle nests in and around U.S. waters are up from 27 in 1989 to 614 in 2014 thanks to protections enacted under the Endangered Species Act.

In addition, 3,960 nests have been counted on the Georgia Coast, a record for the state. By continuing to fund conservation efforts and with the help of volunteers, sea turtles can continue to thrive in the wild.

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org.

Law would phase out subminimum wage for Illinois tipped workers

BY KEVIN BESSLER THE CENTER SQUARE

In an effort to attract workers to the restaurant and bar business, some Illinois lawmakers are proposing hiking the wages of tipped staff.

Legislation has been filed that would phase in a full minimum wage for service workers in addition to their tips. At least a dozen other states are considering eliminating subminimum wages. Under federal law, some workers can be paid less than the minimum wage, such as tipped workers. students and disabled workers. Illinois' minimum wage is \$13 an hour. The state's subminimum is \$7.80 an hour for workers who get tips. "When it comes down to it, to live on \$7.80 an hour is just not doable, it's not sus-tainable and frankly, its exploitative," said State Sen. Christine Pacione-Zayas, D-Chicago, the sponsor of Senate Bill 293.

industry since last year, and over one third of workers who remain in the Illinois restaurant industry are considering leaving their job.

State Rep. Mike Coffey, R-Springfield, who owns a restaurant in Springfield, said the gratuity system that's in place has always worked just fine. If a tipped employee doesn't make a full minimum wage, the employer makes up the difference.

"They've got a system that works, they need to leave it Square. alone," Coffey said. "They've Too

Illinois workers have left the ing to find out new ways to tax people and new regulations to hamper business.

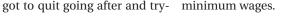
Some are concerned that the higher wages will eventually affect menu prices. There is also a conversation about the effects on service if a worker isn't relying on tips.

"Just because you are now making what is technically defined as a livable wage doesn't mean that automatically makes you a jerk in terms of how you approach your job," Pacione-Zayas told The Center

Today, 43 states use sub-



The group advocating for the pay raise, One Fair Wage, says more than one in seven



Veterans assistance available in Grundy County

The Edward Hines Jr. VA Medical Center Outreach Team and the Grundy County Veterans Assistance Commission, will make an outreach visit at the Morris American Legion, 212 W. Washington St., from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Monday, March 6.

The outreach team can assist veterans with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, along with veteran's benefits available from other agencies. This event is free and open to all veterans.

If a veteran is interested in enrollment in the VA Health Care System, bring a copy of their DD214 and a government issued photo ID. One may be eligible for VA health care benefits if they served in the active military, naval, or air service and didn't receive a dishonorable discharge.

Those who enlisted after Sept. 7, 1980, or entered active duty after Oct. 16, 1981, must have served 24 continuous months or the full period for which you were called to active duty. There are other conditions under which you might be eligible, attending these outreach events will allow you to discuss your situation with the enrollment coordinator directly.



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OBITUARIES

Darlene Baber.

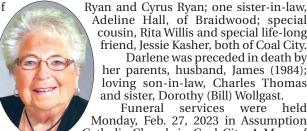
DIAMOND-Darlene Baber, 92, of Diamond, passed away Thursday, Feb. 23, 2023 at the Lightways Hospice Home in Joliet.

Born in Lorenzo, IL on April 9, 1930, Darlene was a daughter of Frank and Dominica "Minnie" (Fornelli) Gross. She was raised and educated in Coal City; graduated from Coal City High School with the class of 1948 and went on to attend Beauticians School. On

April 18, 1953, Darlene married James A. Baber in Assumption Catholic Church and together they made a home and raised a family together.

Darlene worked as a beautician out of her home, and most recently at the nursing home in Wilmington until formally retiring at the age of 85. She was a member of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church in Coal City and served as the activities director at Country Meadows in Diamond for many years. She enjoyed flower gardening and baking, and cherished the time spent with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Survivors include her two daughters, Anita (Harold) Ryan, of Diamond and Cathy Thomas, of Joliet; five grandchildren: Timothy (Jen) Ryan, of Napa, CA; Jennifer (John) Endrst, of Coal City; Patrick Ryan (Kaity Weiland), of Chicago; Ashley Thomas, of Joliet and Matt (Jen Valadez) Thomas, of Riverside, IL; four greatgrandchildren: Rylee Endrst, Ryan Endrst, Noah



Adeline Hall, of Braidwood; special cousin, Rita Willis and special life-long friend, Jessie Kasher, both of Coal City. Darlene was preceded in death by her parents, husband, James (1984);

loving son-in-law, Charles Thomas and sister, Dorothy (Bill) Wollgast. Funeral services were held Monday, Feb. 27, 2023 in Assumption were held

Catholic Church in Coal City. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated with Reverend Jason Stone presiding and Deacon Bill

Dunn Assisting. Burial was in Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wilmington, where Darlene was laid to rest with her late husband and parents.

Pallbearers were: Patrick Ryan, Matt Thomas, Ryan Endrst, Bill Wollgast, Jeff Kasher and John Endrst. Honorary pallbearers were Tim Ryan, Jennifer Endrst and Ashley Thomas.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Darlene's memory to Candlelight Home Healthcare, 115 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL 60416 or Lightways Hospice.

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

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

Sheila Hayden

CHICAGO-Sheila Hayden, 79, of Chicago, formerly of Wilmington, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023 at her residence.

Born Oct. 23, 1943 in Joliet, Sheila Catherine was a daughter of Thomas and Margaret (Kelly) Hayden. She was raised in Wilmington, attended Saint Rose Catholic School, and graduated from the Saint Francis Academy in Joliet. Sheila then left Wilmington at 18 for

Chicago which she adopted as her hometown, and where she attended Moser Business College.

She worked in advertising as a commercial producer for Needham Harper & Steers in Chicago. Sheila worked with countless celebrities on television commercials, including sports stars like Michael Jordan, Walter Payton, and Barry Sanders. She also worked on all major television commercials for McDonalds. Sheila's professionalism and talent were acknowledged in 1982, when she received an ANDY Award of Excellence from the Advertising Club of New York City for her work.

Sheila was a devoted member of St. Patrick Catholic Church in Chicago, and supported Trinity Services and Misericordia School. She was also a member of the Chicago Yacht Club. Sheila was an artist at heart who went out of her way to support artists great and small. Local artists working in public parks would often catch her attention, and she would always take time to acknowledge and support their efforts. Sheila had a keen eye for photography and

especially enjoyed developing her own works. She remained close with her family and friends, who affectionately referred to her as "Hayden of Hollywood.

Survivors include her brother, Thomas P. Hayden, of Wilmington; nephew, Thomas M. Hayden, of Wilmington; best friend and cousin, Mary Fran O'Neil, of Seneca, SC; cousin, JC Kelly, of New Orleans, LA; and good friends and neighbors, Kitty and

Kristy, of Chicago as well as numerous cousins. Sheila was preceded in death by her par-

ents, Thomas and Margaret; brother, Michael Hayden and sister, Mary Ann Hayden.

The family will receive friends for a visitation on Wednesday, March 8, 2023 at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church, 604 S. Kankakee St., in Wilmington from 10 a.m. until the time of funeral services at 11 a.m. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated by Reverend Sebastian Gargol and assisted by Deacon Jay Plese. Burial will follow the funeral at Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wilmington.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Sheila's memory to Misericorida School in Chicago or Trinity Šervices in Wilmington.

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

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

Betty Kusper _

WILMINGTON-Betty Kusper, 69, of Wilmington, passed away Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2023 peacefully at her home.

Born Sept. 3, 1953 in Chicago, Betty was a daughter of Charles and Velma (Wellens) Ehlert. She was raised and educated in Chicago, where she graduated from Morton High School. She had lived previously in Morris, Darien and Clarendon Hills, IL. In 2007 she married Richard Keefe in Morris, and

together they made a home in Wilmington. Betty worked as a bartender for years, with The Step Up of Lyons, IL being her final place of

employment. After seven years she retired from The Step Up in 1988. In her spare time Betty enjoyed antique shopping.

Survivors include her husband Richard; her mother, Velma, of Lyons; four children: Brian Tryba, of Melrose Park; Duane Tryba, of Lyons; Michael Kusper, of Wilmington and Kimberly

Kusper, of Joliet; one grandchild, Quinn Tryba and one sister, Linda (Jack) Adams, of West Plains, MO.

Betty was preceded in death by her father. Charles.

Cremation rites have been accorded and there will be private family services at a later date.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Betty's memory to the ASPCA for prevention of cruelty to ani-

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

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

Donna Goad _____

BRAIDWOOD-Donna Rae Goad (nee Gonis), 71, of Braidwood, passed away unexpectedly Friday, Feb. 24, 2023 at Morris Hospital.

Born July 6, 1951 in Joliet, she was the daughter of Harold and Charlotte Elaine (nee Goldsberry) Gonis. Donna loved her family and adored spending time with her grandchildren. She spent many days going on her daily walks around town and she previously enjoyed crocheting.

Surviving are her husband of 52 years, Larry Goad, of Braidwood, who she married Feb. 12, 1971; two daughters, Stacey (Bruce) Legg, of Diamond and Kelly Goad, of Plymouth Meeting, PA; step-son, Michael Goad, of Diamond; three grandchildren: Dylan and Kalie Legg and Kyle Goad; four brothers: Harold (Kathy) Gonis, of Braidwood; Robert (Anita) Gonis, of Wilmington; Kenneth Gonis, of Braidwood and Roger Gonis, of Braidwood; brothers-in-law, Gary Krug and Martin arrangements.

Housman; sister-in-law, Shereena Gonis and numerous nieces, nephews, and their families.

Preceding her in death were her parents, Harold and Charlotte; two sisters, Doris Krug and Linda Housman and one brother, James Gonis.

Cremation rites have been accorded. Memorial visitation for Donna was held at the R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory on Tuesday,

Memorial donations in her name may be directed to any breast cancer charity of the

For more information and to visit her online guestbook, please log on to www.rwpattersonfuneralhomes.com or find them on Facebook.

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

Rhonda Swanson

CHARLOTTE, FL-Rhonda (Lutes) Swanson, 54, of Port Charlotte, FL, formerly of Wilmington, passed away peacefully on Friday, Jan. 27, 2023 at Tampa General Hospital surrounded by her family.

Born June 9, 1968 in Joliet, Rhonda was the daughter of Trish (Craig) McKim and Norman Lutes. She was raised and educated in Wilmington where she attended Saint Rose Catholic

School and graduated from Wilmington High School with the class of 1986. Following high school, Rhonda worked for the Hawthorne Race Course in Chicago. She also worked for the ExxonMobil Refinery in Channahon and assisted at power plants during outages, as well as for the Carpenters Local Union 174. There were not many things that Rhonda could not do, but she especially enjoyed working outside farming and

Monique Waddell, Kenny Smith and Kenny Bannon; one granddaughter, Cadence Kent, with two more grandchildren expected in April; one brother, Michael "Shane" McKim and his children, Kirstyn, Katy and Brenan McKim; as well as several other nieces, nephews, cousins, aunts, and uncles.

Cremation rites have been accorded and private services were held in Florida. A memori-

Family and friends are encouraged to sign

Roger J. Johnson _

WILMINGTON-Roger J. Johnson, 62, of Wilmington, passed away Sunday, Feb. 26, 2023 at his home.

The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation on Saturday, March 4, 2023 at Baskerville Funeral 700 E. Kahler Rd., in Home, Wilmington from 12 p.m. until the time of memorial service at 4 p.m. Roger will be laid to rest at Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Morris at a later date.

Family and friends are encouraged to

Paul Johnson

sign the online guest book and find full obituary as it becomes available on Roger's memorial page www.BaskervilleFuneral.com. A full obituary will appear in next week's newspaper.

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



Rhonda was preceded in death by two brothers, Tim and Russy McKim; two

uncles, Mike Tinges and Doug Lutes, her maternal grandparents, Ken and Eleanor Tinges, and her paternal grandparents, Clyde and Elsie Lutes.

al service is being planned for a later date in Illinois.

in her garden, and raising chickens. She was the online guest book and share Rhonda's very creative and loved to do handcrafts such as memorial page via social media. sewing. Rhonda loved family, and she was proud to be a loving mother and grandmother.

Survivors include her parents, Trish (Craig) McKim and Norman Lutes; three children:

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

Braidwood, passed away on Feb. 11, 2023. He

Pauline Ruth and Paul Eldon Johnson. Paul is survived by his three sons: Jeffery years, Donna Kay Johnson.

was born on July 22, 1944 in Manilla, AR, to

BRAIDWOOD-Paul Hugh Johnson, 78, of Johnson and Jody Johnson, both of Braidwood and Jason Johnson, of Maryville, TN.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 54

Owen D. Webb



WILMINGTON-Owen D. Webb, 84, of Wilmington, passed away peacefully in ĥis sleep on Monday, Feb.

27, 2023 at his home.

Born Sept. 10, 1938 in Effingham, IL, Owen Dean was a son of Ervin and Mildred (McKinnon) Webb. He was raised and educated in Effingham and graduated from Effingham High School with the class of 1956. Owen enlisted in the United States Navy and saw a lot of the

world, including Turkey, Greece, Spain and served in Cuba during the Cuban Revolution. He married Margaret "Peggy" Starkey on Aug. 23, 1957 in Effingham. They relocated to Manhattan, IL and finally Wilmington in 1964.

He was employed at Statesville Prison, Cel-Fibe in Wilmington, and then joined the worked Teamsters and at Ravburn Transportation Inc. in Wilmington, PT Ferro in Joliet, and also drove for Dan and Cindy Ragain. Owen, or the "Big O" or "Catfish," was larger than life and always had a hearty welcome for anybody he ran into. He was friendly with everyone and loved to talk about any subject, and usually had a strong opinion on whatever that subject was. Owen loved to play cards and did so for many years at the old and new Corner Tap. He really enjoyed his regular Friday night poker game with all of his poker buddies, and he was known to frequent the horse racing track and place a few wagers. Owen was involved in founding the Wilmington Bobcat Football Organization and would coach football, baseball, and softball for many years. He was also the president of the Wilmington Booster Club. Owen was a faithful Wilmington Wildcat Fan and loved watching his children and grandchildren compete in all of the various sports. As he got older, his attention turned to his greatgrandchildren and following them on the softball field. He also enjoyed his visits to his family in Arizona and talking to them on the phone. Owen was also an avid St. Louis Cardinal fan, naturally leading to his dislike of the Chicago Cubs

He was a loving and faithful husband to Peggy for 54 years. They were inseparable, and if



you saw one of them you usually saw the other one. He was a loving father to Vonda, Tonya and Kevin, as well as brother, grandfather "Papa" and greatgrandfather to his entire family, almost always putting their needs ahead of his own.

Owen is survived by two children, Tonya (Ken) Hagemeyer, of Glendale, AZ and Kevin (Paula) Webb, of Wilmington; grandchildren: Dale Smith,

Derek (Tiffany) Smith, Dustin Smith, Nicole (Michael) Moran, Lindsay Hagemeyer, Jordan Hagemeyer, Colin (Ashley) Webb, and Emily (Mike) Harrington; great-grandchildren: Kendall, Kali, Kloe, Richie, Eli, Silas and Spencer; brother, Ronald "Ed" Webb, of Connecticut; sister, Mildred "Diane" Horath, of Florida and special friend, Louie Fox, of Joliet.

Owen was preceded in death by his parents, Ervin and Mildred Webb; his wife, Peggy Webb; two children, Vonda Smith and infant son, Keith Webb; son-in-law, Gary Smith and two brothers, Dale Webb and Joe Webb.

Cremation rites are being accorded, and the family will receive friends for a memorial visitation on Friday, March 3, 2023 at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd., in Wilmington from 4 until 7 p.m., with Masonic Funeral Rites to take place at 7 p.m.

Owen will be laid to rest at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood on Monday, March 6. 2023. Those wishing to attend are welcome to assemble at the funeral home on Monday morning beginning at 11 a.m. for a procession, which will depart at 11:30 a.m. Committal services with full military honors are scheduled at 12 p.m.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Owen's memory to the charity of the donor's loosing

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

Cremation services and memorial arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 East Kahler Road, in Wilmington.

Dennis W. VanDuyne_ COAL VALLEY, IL-Dennis

W. VanDuyne, 88, of Coal Valley, IL passed away Monday, Feb. 27, 2023. Dennis William VanDuyne was born Nov. 3, 1934 in Wilmington, to Peter and Gertrude (Glass) VanDuyne. He served in the U.S. Army and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in account-ing/finance from the University of Illinois. He married Shirley McClellan on Dec. 7, 1965 in Joliet.

Dennis worked as an accountant for the Federal Government retiring from the Rock Island Arsenal after 30 years of services. He enjoyed gardening, planting trees, music and running the Bix. He was an avid Bulls, Fighting Illini, and White Sox fan. Above all else, family was the most important thing to Dennis. He and his wife, Shirley enjoyed 25 years in Florida after their retirements. He loved spending time in his hometown of Wilmington visiting relatives and reminiscing about the adventures of his youth. His children and grandchildren especially loved listening to these stories.

Dennis is survived by his wife, Shirley; eight children: Kelly (Jess Howard) Shaw, of Galesburg; Michele (Kevin) McVietty, of Orion;

Dennis (Rebecca) VanDuyne, of Driggs, ID; Nancy (Paul) Hancock, of Orion; Beth VanDuyne, of Pittsboro, IN; Peggy VanDuyne, of Portland, OR; Alan (Kimberley) VanDuyne, of Lynn Center and Jeffrey VanDuyne, of Coal Valley; 20 grandchildren: Tara, Ross, Morgan, Andrew, Nathan, Emily, Austin, Samuel, Benjamin, Abigail, Rachel, Ryan, Tate, Cade, C.J., Raegan, Mallary, Hayley, Maya and Elyse; five

great-grandchildren; sisters-in-law, Margaret and Martina VanDuyne and many nieces, nephews, and close friends, including his neighbors of 48 years.

He was preceded in death by his parents and 14 siblings. He is now reunited with them all and loved them dearly.

Visitation is 4-7 p.m. Friday, March 3 at Trimble Funeral Home, Coal Valley, beginning with a prayer service at 3:30 p.m. A Mass of Christian Burial is at 11 a.m. Saturday, March 4 at St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church, Coal Valley, with additional visitation from 10 a.m. until time of service. Burial is in Coal Valley Cemetery. Memorials may be made to the church or Food for the Poor.

Cemetery clean-up is Saturday

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

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

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

Anything not removed by the end of clean-up, will be removed and disposed of by the cemetery employees. When clean-up has commenced, shepherds hooks, only one per grave, can be placed.

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

Gather electronics, string lights for recycling

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Impending Medicaid changes could leave hundreds of thousands uninsured

BY PETER HANCOCK CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD-As many as 700,000 Illinoisans may lose Medicaid coverage in the months following March 31, but the Department of Healthcare and Family Services says it is working to reduce that number and help those affected find health insurance elsewhere.

Medicaid is a health insurance program for poor and disabled people that is jointly funded by the federal government and the states.

Congress passed a spending bill in December that puts a March 31 end to a pandemicera rule that paid states that kept Medicaid patients continuously enrolled in the program through the end of the public health emergency.

Those individuals did not have to go through the normal process of reapplying every 12 months to determine whether they were eligible, even if there were changes in their income or household that would normally make them ineligible.

The change in law means many who have been receiving continuous coverage will have to reapply for benefits, potentially leading to loss of coverage if the individual would no longer qualify for benefits or if they fail to complete a reapplication.

Nationwide, the federal government estimates that 15 million people, or 17.4% of Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program enrollees, will lose their coverage as a result of the change. That would translate to roughly 700,000 people in Illinois, but DHFS officials believe they

"roughly 384,000" individuals through outreach efforts.

The department also noted that those individuals will be subject to redetermination over a staggered timeline over the next 12 months, not all at once when the program

"The truth is, nobody knows for sure. What we do know is that we are committed to ensuring everyone who is eligible maintains their coverage, and that those who are not are given information about alternative coverage,' DHFS spokesperson Jamie Munks said in an email.

To avoid losing coverage, DHFS strongly urges Medicaid enrollees to fill out their renewal forms as soon as possible. The agency will resume regular verifications starting in late April, and people with a

can mitigate the impact to June renewal date will be the first to go through the restart ed process. Those people will need to submit their renewal forms before June 1 so they can maintain coverage.

Customers can complete their renewal by phone although online is the preferred method. She also said it is important for enrollees to update their contact information with the Medicaid program.

Munks said people who are found to be ineligible may still have other options for low-cost insurance, including individual plans sold through the Affordable Care Act marketplace, Get Covered Illinois People who meet certain income guidelines can receive tax credits to pay all or part of their premiums.

ments and services

accessing care.'

The

"So with a successful pilot

underway and under our belt,

we are now going to build out

this more robust care portal

for children and families seek-

ing behavioral health service

es," he said. "And we're adding

to it a hotline for assistance

and specialized guidance for

those beginning the process of

Initiative report also spells sev-

eral other recommendations

for improving services. Those

include standardizing reim-

bursement rates for services so

providers are compensated

consistently; offering universal

screening in schools and

health care settings for behav-

ioral health problems so they

are detected early; and

expanding eligibility for cur-

rent programs and developing

behavioral health support that

we desperately need for our

kids and adults hinges on

growing our behavioral

healthcare workforce. We have

to do it," state Representative

Lindsey LaPointe, D-Chicago,

a former social worker, said

posal released last week

Pritzker asked for \$22.8 million

to begin to fund and imple-

ment the Transformation

Initiative's recommendations.

signed an executive order

Also on Friday, Pritzker

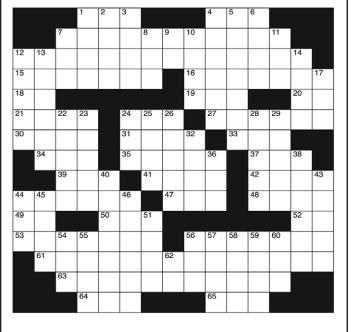
As part of his budget pro-

"Our ability to provide the

new service types.

during the event.

Transformation



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Relaxing place
- 4. Plant by scattering
- 7. A type of explorer
- 12. Unique traits
- 15. Lady
- 16. Dismayed
- 18. Railway 19. Type of whale
- 20. Sodium
- 21. Manning and Lilly are two
- 24. Where golfers begin
- 27. Entrapped
- 30. Influential punk artist 31. Hebrew calendar month
- 33. Car mechanics group
- 34. Undesirable rodent
- 35. Minneapolis suburb

CLUES DOWN

- 1. A person with unusual
- powers of foresight 2. Single sheet of glass
- 3. Portrays a character
- 4. Expresses happiness
- 5. Acquires
- 6. "The Martian" author
- 7. Degree 8. 60-minute intervals
- 9. A detective's pal
- 10. Group of nations (abbr.)
- 11. Popular Georgia rockers

- 37. Witch 39. Get free of 41. A written proposal or reminder 42. British School 44. Country on west coast of Africa 47. Cool!
- 48. Information
- 49. route
- 50. Jim Nantz's network
- 52. Something to register (abbr.)

53. Give cards incorrectly 56. One who's learning on the job 61. Stevenson adventure novel

- 63. Taking careful notice
- 64. CNN's founder
- 65. Speak badly of

- 26. Very willing
- 28. Expressed pleasure
- 29. Lasso
 - 32. Hindu model of ideal man
 - 36. Move your head in approval 38. Ill- : gained illegally
 - 40. Die
 - 43. Accused publicly
 - 44. Precious stone
 - 45. Individual thing or person
 - 46. Behaved in a way that degraded
- 51. Derogatory term

2 9 5 6 4 2 7 1 8 4 5 6 9

Pritzker launches children's behavioral health initiative

BY PETER HANCOCK CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD – Citing what he called a nationwide crisis in children's mental health, Gov. JB Pritzker on Feb. 24 unveiled a sweeping plan to overhaul and expand the availability of children's behavioral health services in Illinois.

"Long before COVID-19 turned our world upside down, our nation was facing a mental health crisis," Pritzker said at an event at the West40 Regional Safe School in the west Chicago suburb of Maywood. "Nearly one in five children experienced a mental health disorder, from depression to anxiety to ADHD. But only 20% of them received the behavioral health care that they needed."

In March of last year, Pritzker launched what was Children's called the Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative, a agencies and other outside ed to youth mental health

entities that deal with children's mental health. Its task was to build a coordinated, interagency approach to ensuring young people with significant behavioral health needs receive the community and residential services they need.

The results of that effort were released in a recent report that examined data from multiple state agencies to assess the need for services, determine which populations are most affected by the crisis and come up with a plan for coordinating state resources to meet those needs.

"It's a blueprint for transformation of the behavioral health system for Illinois' youth," Pritzker said. "This is an unprecedented interagency effort that will provide more and better treatment and save lives."

Although a recent study by Mental Health America found Illinois ranks 13th-best project that involved six state overall on a set of factors relat-

care. the Transformation Initiative analysis found that 40 percent of young people in Illinois who experienced major depressive episodes were unable to receive mental health care.

Youth in care of the Department of Children and Family Services who need inpatient residential treatment for their condition are disproportionately Black, the report found. As well, the report found a quarter of all the beds at residential treatment facilities are unavailable due to understaffing.

It also found that the state has a fragmented system of delivering mental and behavioral health services, with different state agencies providing services under different standards and often paying different reimbursement rates for similar services.

"Multiple state agencies operate programs that provide services to support children's behavioral health, but there is minimal systematic coordination and no holistic, developmentally informed approach to meeting youth needs," the report stated. "With no central point of entry to help families navigate, children and families must access services differently across agencies, meet agency-specific eligibility requirements, and maintain access to services with minimal supports."

To address that issue, Pritzker said, the Transformation Initiative developed and pilot tested a new online portal where people seeking assistance for establishing a new office of youth could connect with the Children's Behavioral Health services they need. He Transformation Initiative described it as "a kind of a Chief to lead the interagency front door for stakeholders seeking assistance for youth with the greatest needs.' As of Jan. 30, after only a few months of operation, Pritzker said, 41% of the cases that came through that portal had already been connected Transformation Initiative, with interventions, place-

12. Fencing swords	54. No seats available
13. Basement	55. Liability
14. Samoan monetary unit	56. Popular beverage
17. Male parent	57. Tough outer skin of fruit
22. Finnish lake	58 Spumante (Italian wine)
23. A smooth fabric	59. Troubles
24. Arctic explorers (abbr.)	60. Negative
25. Mild yellow Dutch cheese	62. Camper

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effort to implement that plan. At the event in Maywood, he announced that Dana Weiner, a child welfare expert at the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall who chaired the would fill that role.



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State Democrats targeting school board candidates

Gov. JB Pritzker told into races, includreporters a few weeks ago that he was concerned about some local school and library board races.

"There are organizations that are anti-LGBTQ, that are racist, they're anti Muslim, that are supporting candidates for these local boards. And they're trying to take over at a local level and build up candidates at the local level that they can then run for the state legislature and for other offices."

Far-right groups like Awake Illinois morphed from fighting school-based COVID mitigations into battling socalled "woke" ideas like Critical Race Theory (which isn't taught anywhere), sex education and local drag story-reading. The group once referred to Pritzker as a "groomer." Awake Illinois claimed last

week that they've identified more than 70 candidates, although the group's political committee reported having just \$100 in cash in January and it often grossly exaggerates its real-life prowess.

But the environment out there is hot right now, with national activists like Charlie Kirk holding local events and stirring up passions. The Illinois Policy Institute has a private "Parents Union' Facebook group that focuses on school board elections and sharing information and ginning people up as much as possible.

ing in McLean County, which has become a hotbed of radicalization. Palatine's high school district is also attracting local GOP assistance, where some residents are up in arms about the local school board adopting sex education standards.

Together we can

CAPITOL FACTS

Rich Miller

gain a majority on the board and put a stop to the sexualization of children in our schools," read one recent doorhanger.

When told of local Republican Party support for some of these candidates and asked what he intended to do about it, Pritzker said, "We are supporting candidates that are standing up for freedom." But with an April 4th election date looming, that plan hadn't yet been in plain sight.

The plan is now coming into more focus. The Democratic Party of Illinois began by initially looking at 400-some races and then identifying more than 100 what they call "fringe" candidates in 60 different school board districts. All of those districts and most of those candidates will be targeted in what party officials say will be a "robust" campaign.

'It's going to be very much Local Republican Party a voter education program,"

of Illinois official. The state party will be "shedding light on the fact that there are candidates supported by these national extremist groups that are on their ballot."

"We want to make investments that actually have some real effect at spreading the word about these extremists candidates," the

official said. The party's preferred candidates will receive on-theground help, like "cutting turf" for door-to-door canvassers. But they'll also receive assistance with their messaging, plus the state party will sponsor or help with direct mail and digital ads, as well as opposition research.

The state party has been working on this plan for weeks and has reached out to local county parties, state central committeepersons, grassroots groups and unions (mainly the teachers and AFSCME), not only for help with candidates and identifying the radicals, but also with knowledge of important issues in the targeted districts.

These races are not partisan in the traditional sense because candidates often run on local slates. So, mailers paid for by the Democratic Party of Illinois could generate a backthey'll mainly be communicating "to a base audience" of fellow Democrats. The party also says they'll be deferring to local "partners" on "where to be involved louder than other areas."

"A lot of these people, this was their first time running for office," the party official said. While some have political experience, they are, "looking for some guidance on how to structure their campaign, what kind of timeline to follow, how to target voters. So, we're providing them with that sort of campaign expertise.'

Without intervention, the party official said, "We could easily see ourselves electing numerous extremist folks to these positions that have a ton of power."

"Our values are on the line," the official claimed.

This is an unprecedented move, but perhaps we're in unprecedented times. And it's exactly the sort of thing the governor has been saying for years that the state party should be focusing on: Building the party up from the bottom and focusing resources on much more than legislative and statewide contests.

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

CC United Methodist to host blood drive

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

willing to Anyone donate blood can contact Karen Hart at 708-217-5808

United to schedule a preferred time or you may register online at www.versiti.org.

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



organizations are also jumping explained a Democratic Party lash. But DPI is saying that Local price drops but statewide gas rises

risen 2.4 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.51/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

But locally on Monday prices dropped as much as 13 cents per gallon in Braidwood over the week before, 8 cents/g in Wilmington and 7 cents/g in Coal City. Average prices were \$3.36, \$3.40 and \$3.58, respectively.

Prices in Illinois are 15.6 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 33.5 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

The national average has resumed its decline after a pause last week as oil and wholesale gasoline prices fell on worrisome inflation figures showing the Fed likely to ramp up rates to slow inflation," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"Some nine out of 10 states saw declines

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have over the last week, so the drops are showing up for most across the country, with the exception of the West Coast as the transition to summer blends continues, and in the Great Lakes, where prices cycled last week but have now resumed declining."

The national average price of diesel has fallen 7.7 cents to \$4.38 per gallon.

The lowest price in the state was \$2.95/g while the highest was \$4.79/g, a difference of \$1.84/g.The national average price of gasoline is \$3.33/g.

"For the weeks ahead, tradition tells us to expect prices to move up eventually, but that could be at least be partially offset by inflationary data that continues to be hotter than expected, leading to anxiety that the Fed will boost interest rates and cooling the economy and oil demand considerably," said De Haan.







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Phone (815) 476-7966 or (815) 634-0315 for details.

The Braidwood Journal - The Coal City Courant - The Free Press Advocate

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Accepting bids. 1996 International 4900 as is. 4x2 single axle, 26,000 11R/22.5 tires, miles, fixed bed, V Box with conveyor, rear spreader, Monroe 11 Ft Poly Snow Plow. Repairs needed. Contact . Highway Commissioner Jeff Sorensen at 815-476-7869 with questions. Sealed bids due to Wesley Town-ship Hall by 3:00 PM on April 11, 2023 and will opened at the be monthly township meeting later that evening at 7:00PM. Wesley Town-ship Road District 21333 W Ballou Rd

Wilmington, IL 60481 ch9-11

DUPLEXES FOR RENT

2 Bedroom, 1 bath, 2 car garage. 140 W. Fourth Coal City. \$1,200/month plus security. 815-210-9220

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

HELP WANTED

The Braidwood Recreation Club is hiring for the 2023 Season. Concession Stand - Must be at least 16 years old. Operating hours are from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day. Open daily 10:30am to 6:00pm, 7 days per week. Must be willing to work flexible hours and duties include stocking, cleaning, and customer service. Shifts will be approximately 5 hours each. Custodians -Must be at least 16 years old and be open to a flexible schedule. Certified Lifeguards -All applicants must be CPR and Lifeguard Certified and be at least 16 years of age. Proof of certification must be provided at time of application. Gate Guards -Average 5 hour shifts. Applications can be printed off the club website (on Club Docu-

ments page) at braidwoodrecclub.com and emailed or picked up at the office. Please call with questions 815-458-2150. ch9-12

FARM EQUIPMENT City hiring Gatequards. guards, Area nance and Main Office Admin. \$15. LG Su-pervisors, \$16. Appli-cations @ our website or main office. 285 S.

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all

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Wilmington Police Department, Wilmington, Illinois The Wilmington, Illinois Board of Police Commission is accepting applications for the position of police officer with the Wilmington Police Department. Starting Salary: \$61,530 - \$73,376 Population: 5, Sworn Police Officers: 22* (17 Full-Time and 5 Part-Time) *Will add four (4) full-time within next 2 years.

The Wilmington Police Department is proud to announce that they are now

HELP WANTED HOMES FOR RENT House for rent: 3 bed-Area Club, positions. room, 2 bath, attached Life-Mainte-

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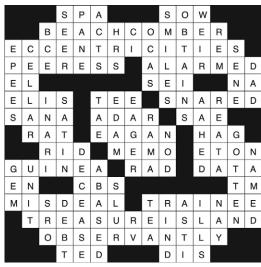
Please visit http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/onthejob_apprenticeship.asp

All applicants must meet the following minimum requirements established by the City of Wilmington: • U.S. citizenship; • No felony convictions;

- Possess a valid state-issued driver's license with good driving record;
- Must be a minimum of 21 years of age and UNDER 35 years of age at the time of application unless otherwise exempt by State Statute 65 ILCS 5/10-2.1-6;
- Possess a high school diploma or G.E.D. equivalent;
 Possess a valid NIPSTA card OR equivalent criteria as per the State standard, issued within 12 months of the written exam date (April 15, 2023);
 POWER Test Cards issued by NIPSTA, Triton College or Joliet Junior College will be
 - accepted.
 - · Applicants must present the POWER Test card NO LATER than the written exam date (April 15, 2023).
- · Any applicant who would like to schedule a ride along with a Wilmington police officer may contact Sergeant Dan Brimer at 815-476-2813.
- Successfully pass a written examination with a minimum passing score of 70% on each of the (4) sections;
- Successfully complete an oral interview with the Board of Police Commission;
- · Successfully complete a background investigation, polygraph, and psychological testing;
- Successfully complete a medical physical, to include drug and alcohol screening; . There is no application processing fee.
- Applications must be submitted prior to April 3, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.

To apply for this position or obtain additional information, please visit the following website: http://www.applytoserve.com The City of Wilmington is an Equal Opportunity Employer

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COMET SPORTS Comet seniors, parents recognized



JACOB MCPHERSON, a basketball senior, is the son of Chris and Beth McPherson. After graduation, he will attend the University of Wisconsin - Whitewater to study business and play baseball. His favorite memory is beating Jace and Wes in 8 spot shooting every time.



SENIOR LUCAS FOOTE is the son of Josh and Sara Foote. In the fall, Lucas will attend the University of Wisconsin – Platteville to play football and work on a degree in engineering. His favorite memory is watching Cooper dominate Jace in practice every day. Lucas will miss having the chance to play basketball with his friends daily.



REED-CUSTER SENIOR Drew Anderson, son of Janine Jones and Matthew Anderson, was recently honored during Senior Night for the basketball Comets. In the fall, he plans on attending JJC and becoming an electrician. His favorite memory was the energy in the locker room after beating Streator. Drew will miss the 11-man break at the beginning of every practice.



SENIOR JOSHUA BOHAC, son of Josh Sr. and Felicia Bohac, will head off to college to continue playing one of his favorite sports, football. Josh's favorite memory was the entirety of his sophomore year. He will greatly miss the opportunity to play basketball every day with his friends.



SENIOR JACE CHRISTIAN was escorted by his parents Scott and Lynn Christian during the Reed-Custer basketball senior night. Jace plans on attending the University of Wisconsin—Platteville to pursue a degree in engineering. His favorite memory was being around everybody during the season and making memories with his entire team.



WESLEY SHATS, a Comet senior, is the son of Nicole Shats and Wes Shats. In the fall, Wes will attend a four-year universityto pursue a degree in engineering. His favorite memory was his freshman year as a whole and hanging with brother John before practice and games. Wes will miss the team and playing his favorite sport.

Golf outing to support childhood cancer research

Megan's Mission Foundation will host its annual golf outing to continue Megan Bugg's mission of ending childhood cancer. The Megan Bugg Memorial Golf Outing is scheduled for Saturday, July 22 at The Creek in Morris with a shotgun start at 9 a.m.





CONNOR EGGLESTON is escorted by his parents Jessica and Todd Eggleston during basketball senior night. After Connor graduates from Reed-Custer he plans on joining the trades and becoming an engineer. One of his favorite memories was the game where everyone was following behind Wes before it started and Cooper fell into someone in the stands. Connor will miss sitting on the bench during games and doing all of the little things the team did together when something big happened on the court. SENIOR VICTORIA LOOMIS, a Comet cheerleader, is the daughter of Christy Robert and Matthew Loomis, escorted along with her step-father, Brandon. After graduation she plans on attending Lewis University to study pre-medicine and biology. Tori's favorite memories are making it to state her junior year and placing in the top 5 every competition this season. All proceeds from the event will go to further the work taking place at the Megan Bugg Global Rhabdomyosarcoma Research Laboratory at Children's Cancer Therapy Development Institute [CC-TDI].

The foundation recently donated \$100,000 to continue supporting two promising childhood cancer research projects that Megan founded at CC-TDI, according to Kent Bugg, Megan's father and foundation president.

The cost to play a round of golf in honor of Megan is \$500 per foursome—\$125 per golfer— and includes 18 holes of golf and lunch.

Non-golfers who would like to support Megan's Mission can do so by signing on as sponsor—various levels are available—or participating in the post golf lunch that will include raffles, silent auction and a presentation about Megan's Mission.

To register for the outing, inquire about sponsorships or make a donation text 815-210-6394 or e-mail debbugg@gmail.com.

Senior Lady Comets honored during final home game



REED-CUSTER SENIORS who were honored along with their parents during Senior Night during the last home game of the regular season are (from left) Samantha Sprimont, Caelan Cole, Brooklyn Harding, Laci Newbrough and Addison Harms.



()R⁻



ACCEPTING A CHECK for \$500 are members of the boys and girls basketball teams at Reed-Custer High School. From left are Coach Mark Porter, Jacob McPherson, Lucas Foote, Laci Newbrough, Caelan Cole, Brooklyn Harding, Coach Shelby Zwolinski and Christine Mendez, Marketing & Sales Director of Grundy Bank.

It pays to "shoot for 3's" thanks to Grundy Bank

The Reed-Custer Comets benefited High School. from Grundy Bank's \$3 for 3-Pointer program this past basketball season. For each 3-pointer made by either the boys' or girls' varsity teams, \$3 was donated by Grundy Bank.

Grundy Bank during our basketball said Chuck Anderson, season,"

"They sponsored each 3-point made basket at the boys and girls regular season home games. We plan to use the money towards equipment and supplies within the boys' and girls' bas-"We are very happy to partner with ketball programs. Reed-Custer High School athletics would like to thank Grundy Bank for their generosity and Director of Athletics at Reed Custer look forward to working with them in

the future.

The girls' varsity team made 20 3point shots and the boys' varsity team made 97 3-point shots for a total of 117 3-pointers and a grand total of \$351 for the school. Grundy Bank generously donated \$500 to the Reed-Custer High School Athletic Department for this program.

'We believe that having a partner-

ship with our local high schools and students is important. Grundy Bank was excited to offer this program to the Reed Custer Comets boys' and girls' varsity basketball teams. We applaud all players and hope they had a terrific season.," said Christine Mendez, Marketing & Sales Director of Grundy Bank

JVLady Panthers play for regional title

Reed-Custer The Middle School 7th grade volleyball team advanced to the regional championship after beating Saratoga on Monday, 25-14, 28-26.

"They played a phenomenal game and came out on top to advance to the championship," coach Lauren Cunning said.

They were to battle Peru last night (Tuesday) for the regional champi-

onship. The JV Lady Panthers won the opening round of regionals against Spring Valley Kennedy, 25-14 and 25-13.

They finished the regular season with a loss to GSW. Despite their loss, Sophie Moyers had Madelynn four aces. Marschner had one assists, one kill and one ace. Peyton Landgraf had three aces and three digs. Kadance VanDuyne had three aces and one dig Emberly and Schumacher had one ace.

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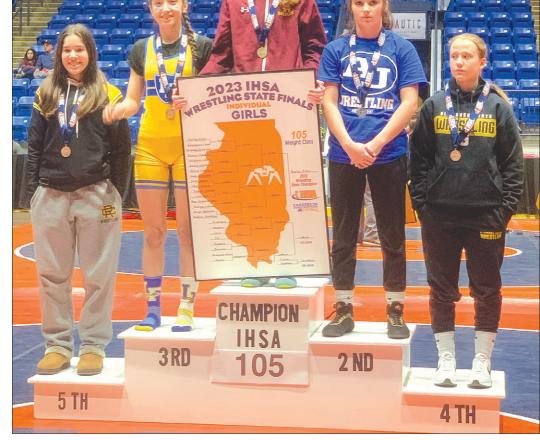




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Courtesy photo

REED-CUSTER JUNIOR Judith Gamboa (left) traveled to Grossinger Arena in Bloomington, IL on Friday and Saturday, to compete in the IHSA Girls State Tournament. She started off slow, losing her first match, but then battled all the way back to 5th place! Last year, Judith made history being Reed-Custer's first IHSA Girls State Qualifier and now she is the first girls' placer in school history. Hard work pays off. Go Comets!

Lady Panthers drop two just before regional

The Reed-Custer 8th grade volleyball team Saturday. lost to MVK, 25-18, 22-25, and 21-25. Taylor They Bova had nine kills, four aces, and one dig. Alyssa Wollenzien had three kills, two digs, four aces, and one block.

Mackenzie Foote had six aces, three digs, and four kills. Kirstin Klein seven aces and one dig. Reese Brown had four aces. Gracie Robinson had three kills. Regionals are next dig. Emily Garabedian had one ace.

They also lost to GSW, 8-25 and 23-25. Alyssa Wollenzien had six kills. Mackenzie Foote had two kills and two aces. Reese Brown had four assists and one dig. Kirstin Klein had two aces and two assists. Taylor Bova had one kill. Kayla Schott and Molly Jarchow each had one