

City Council,

continued from page 1

\$16,047 will be paid for through the police department's asset forfeiture fund.

Poppy Day

The council approved City Clerk Sarah Weaver's recommendation that Braidwood American Legion's Poppy Days be scheduled for Friday, May 9 and Saturday, May 10.

"The donations support veterans services in our area, including the Manteno Homes for Vets Organization, and the Fisher House at Hines VA Hospital," Weaver said.

Weaver also advised residents that yard waste collection will begin on April 1. Collectors will no longer accept garbage in the yard waste bin.

Police & ESDA Reports

Commissioner Wilczak provided a summary of police reports from Feb. 25 through March 10:

Total Calls: 265
Case reports: 24
Arrests: 10
Charges: 18
Traffic stops: 85
Citations: 39
Written warnings: 35
Semi tickets: 2
Parking tickets: 3

Wilczak also reported that Braidwood ESDA worked with the police and fire department, contributing 26.5 volunteer hours during the month of February.

For the fiscal year, the ESDA has donated a total of 654 volunteer hours.

Planning and Zoning business

The council approved the final plat of Jevara Commons Subdivision, PIN No. 02-24-07-307-001-0000. The plat will be submitted to Will County, and there are currently plans to build seven new homes.

The council also passed a variance for 533 E. Cody Lane, PIN No. 02-24-09-301-018-0000. The owner requests to build an 18-foot building with metal siding at the rear of the property. George Kocek, Chairman of Planning and Zoning, said that the building's owner had communicated plans with neighbors and there were no objections.

Commissioner Warren Wietting spoke of his experiences as Public Buildings and Property Commissioner.

"We are all here to do what's best for the City of Braidwood," Wietting said. "We cannot change what happened decades before; we can only improve on the future of our community."

Wietting also addressed "personal attacks" on the city leaders, especially city manager Tony Altieri.

"The administrator works for the mayor and council," he said. "So, in my mind these false accusations are directed to the entire administration. The many companies that have brought their business to Braidwood include Ultimate Rides, GM and Ford dealerships, Mastodon Service Center and its associated restaurants and convenience store, Braidwood Truck Stop and it's related developments, the possibility of a data center, and many other small companies....Our administrator has the best interest of this city in mind and does not make decisions without the council's approval."

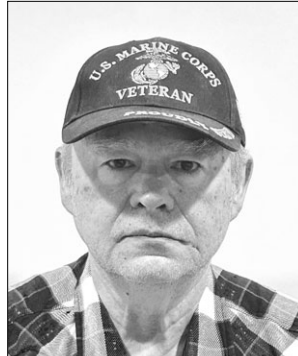
In other business, the council approved bill payment of \$296,565.73 and payroll expenses of \$96,230.74.



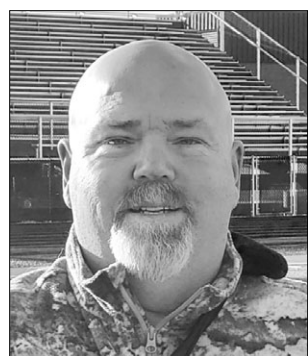
KIM EARLING



LIZ DIXON



RON WILCZAK



JAMES "MOOSE" MIKEL

City council hopefuls share their ideas

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

By all accounts, the April 1 election of Braidwood mayor and two city council members will be a close one.

Candidates were asked four very basic questions that were meant to share their management style and convey their creative ideas for making the City of Braidwood the best it can be.

Incumbent Ron Wilczak, Sr., will be challenged by James "Moose" Mikel for the position of Public Health and Safety Commissioner.

Incumbent Kim Earling will be competing against Liz Dixon for position of Accounts and Finance Commissioner.

Below are the questions we asked Braidwood candidates and their answers.

**Kim Earling
Accounts and Finance
Commissioner**
As a candidate what will you bring to the table?

As a candidate for the Accounts and Finance Commissioner's seat and Vice President of the city council I offer 20-plus years of office management with federally regulated employees. I am focused on restructuring office processes and procedures according to policy to include better time management skills and more efficient ways to increase

profit margins.
Do you have any ideas that would help bring more businesses to Braidwood?

I believe more residential developments would help by creating more foot traffic to increase population that would entice businesses to be a part of our community along with offering business incentives that would benefit to keep our property taxes affordable.

If you received a \$1 million grant to use for the city in any way you saw fit, what would be your priority?

If I received a \$1 million grant the first project I would focus on is the community's suggestions and ideas for a park or area that better meets the needs for all residents to include special needs children, adults, and elderly activities. I believe by cleaning up our downtown or possibly creating a new recreation for events with the hopes to bring our community together.

Share your thoughts for attracting more businesses?

Attracting residents and new businesses work hand in hand. New rooftops increasing population equals business enticement which equals job opportunities that will attract new residents. I would also like to include bringing in family oriented events with vendors in a new, improved, and updated downtown area.

**Liz Dixon
Accounts and Finance
Commissioner**
As a candidate what will you bring to the table?

As a candidate, I will bring my experience in financial management to the City of Braidwood. My background includes budgeting, financial analysis, data analysis, and managing accounts receivable/payable. Additionally, I have the capability to work collaboratively as part of a team to achieve shared objectives.

Do you have any ideas that would help bring more businesses to Braidwood?

I firmly believe that to attract businesses, we need a city that demonstrates growth and appears welcoming to potential enterprises. Currently, if you travel down our main street, you will notice numerous empty storefronts and two large buildings. We must apply for city improvement grants to assist existing businesses in upgrading their facades, thereby showcasing our pride in the city and signal-

ing to new businesses that we care and welcome their presence.

If you received a \$1 million grant to use for the city in any way you saw fit, what would be your priority?

If I received a \$1 million grant, I would allocate it to roads and infrastructure. Our town needs to be more appealing to attract new businesses. Currently, many non-state roads require repaving and shoulder repairs. Additionally, several improvements are necessary, such as repairs to water mains.

Share your thoughts for attracting more businesses?

To attract new residents, I propose implementing similar strategies as those suggested for businesses. This includes cleaning up Main Street, paving roads, increasing the presence of small businesses on Main Street, and developing the Interstate 55 Corridor with essential community amenities such as restaurants, hotels, and places where individuals can gather with friends and family. By showcasing what our town has to offer and demonstrating the pride we take in our community, visitors will be more likely to stay permanently.

**Ron Wilczak, Sr.
Public Health and
Safety
Commissioner**
As a candidate what will you bring to the table?

I will bring a long history of excellent management skills that have been recognized as a top contributor under many scenarios. I will bring a dedication to doing the best job possible for all the residents of Braidwood! I will apply skills that include strong attention to detail, outstanding logic reasoning as verified in many tests, along with a strong desire to help others to have the best life they can.

Do you have any ideas that would help bring more businesses to Braidwood?

Continue to interact with business leaders, real estate owners and developers to promote the development of business that would be good for Braidwood, including improved development of the downtown area. Pursue and encourage a hotel to locate in Braidwood near one of the two Interstate 55 exits, as a hotel has been proven to attract other desired businesses like restaurants, fast food, and other desirable businesses. Consider encouraging some type of strip mall where multiple types of stores and shops could open up.

If you received a \$1 million grant to use for the city in any way you saw fit, what would be your priority?

I would have multiple priorities and I would want to hear from Braidwood residents on what they desired most.

2. Some priorities would include: Getting improvement to the park

district, library and school facilities, enabling them to offer more activities for all levels of children and adults. Help establish a sit down restaurant. Help with improvements and incentives to the downtown district. Help improve and build more sidewalks and bicycle paths

Share your thoughts for attracting more businesses?

To get more residents, we first have to get more housing since we have a shortage of housing in Braidwood at this time. We also could use more businesses and recreational facilities in Braidwood, as I have mentioned. We need to continue to pursue road improvements, sidewalks, bicycle paths, and parking facilities to attract more stores that might interest

people to live here.

**James "Moose" Mikel
Public Health and
Safety
Commissioner**
As a candidate, what will you bring to the table?

Having grown up here, I have an understanding of Braidwood and its citizens. With this, I can work well with the community and businesses to continuously improve our town with honesty and integrity.

Do you have any ideas that would help bring more business to Braidwood?

Work with the mayor and city council to reach out and present Braidwood to outside businesses to sell Braidwood as a great option for expansion.

If you received a \$1m grant to use for the city, in any way you see fit, what would be your priority?

I'd love to establish additional safe, family-friendly activities, and youth opportunities in our town. Kids are lacking in things to do outside of their homes.

Share your ideas for attracting more residents.

I will collaborate with commissioners and the mayor for ongoing improvements to attract new community members.

*Reed Township
to hold annual
town meeting*

PUBLIC NOTICE

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN To the legal voters, residents of the Town of Reed in the County of Will and State of Illinois, that the Annual Town Meeting of said Town will take place on Tuesday, April 8, 2025, as required by 60 ILCS 1/30-10 at the hour of 6:00 p.m. at the Reed Township Building, 440 N. Division Street, Braidwood, IL 60408 for the transaction of the miscellaneous business of the said town; and after a Moderator having been elected, will proceed to hear and consider reports of officers, and decide on such measures as may, in pursuance of law, come before the meeting; and specially to consider and decide the following:

1. Approval of the Town Fund
2. Approval of the General Assistance Fund
3. Approval of the Road and Bridge Fund
4. Resolution to Oppose Township Consolidation into County Government

Dated: March 17, 2025
Thomas Nahas,
Town Clerk

Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

Excitement building over 'Spring into Wilmington' event

Buying a \$20 passport and doing a little leg work could result in someone winning a new vehicle.

It's just one of the prizes listed in the "Spring Into Wilmington" event, sponsored by the Wilmington Rotary Club, going on now through March 30.

Excitement is growing since Saturday when the shop Wilmington challenge kicked off with three ways to win:

1. Purchase a Passport: \$20 entry for a chance to win three amazing prizes.

2. Complete Your Passport by visiting 20 participating businesses. Get all 20 validations stamped in order to spin the prize wheel for a dining room set, \$300 cash, gift cards and baskets, and throw the dice for a chance to win a 2025 Ford Bronco Sport.

3. Raffle Tickets: Purchase raffle tickets for a chance to win gift baskets and gift cards.



A 2025 FORD BRONCO Sport is one of the prizes listed in the "Spring into Wilmington" passport book, offered by D'Orazio Ford, until March 30.

It's that simple. The Rotary Club came up with the passport to drive more awareness for 20 Wilmington businesses.

Purchase passports at Wilmington Public Library, 201 S. Kankakee St, Wilmington. Don't miss out

on the chance to explore Wilmington, support local businesses and win fantastic prizes.

**Stocks. Bonds. CDs. IRAs.
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Let's explore.



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*Trenkamp petitions
for name change*

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS
COUNTY OF WILL, SS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
In the matter of the petition to change the name of MICHELLE LYNN TRENKAMP to the new name of MICHELLE LYNN MEENAN, Case No. 24 MR 187

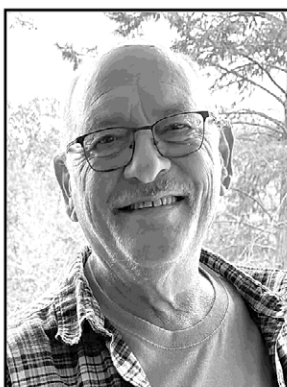
NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned on behalf of herself, Michelle Lynn Trenkamp, adult, shall appear in the Will County Court Annex Building, 100 West Jefferson Street, Joliet, IL 60432 courtroom 905 at 9:00 a.m. on the 15th day of April, 2025 before the judge assigned to hear said matter, and then there present a petition requesting the name of Michelle Lynn Trenkamp be changed to Michelle Lynn Meenan.

/s/ Michelle Lynn Trenkamp
Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, March 5, 12 and 19, 2025.

★ **VOTE** ★
KEN CORBIN

REED TOWNSHIP TRUSTEE



Hello, my name is Ken Corbin, and I am running for the office of trustee in Reed Township. I would be deeply grateful for your vote on April 1st. As a lifelong resident and graduate of Reed-Custer High School, I possess intimate knowledge of our community. My professional

background comprises 33 years at Caterpillar and 14 years of service with the Reed Township Highway Department. I am currently a member of the board and would appreciate your vote.

Thank you. Ken Corbin

Paid for by Ken Corbin



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Eric D. Fisher, publisher

The rise and fall of the Braidwood coal company

The founding father of Braidwood, James Braidwood, and his family, his short life and his coal company are the subject today.



TIME WAS.... Sandy Vasko

George Woodruff in The History of Will County, 1878 describes him this way; “Mr. James Braidwood claims that he built the first house in Braidwood, had the first house to burn, sunk the first coal shaft in Braidwood, his wife had the first child born and the first child to die in Braidwood.”

“In Aug., 1865, he came to Braidwood; here he set out in coal mining, in working for the Chicago & Wilmington Coal Co.; was in the company that sunk the Eagle Shaft, near the depot, in 1869; he went to Champaign Co. and was engaged there in sinking a shaft for coal; after working for six months, abandoned without finding any coal; he lost \$6,000 cash (about \$143,800 today); he returned to Braidwood and commenced the coal busi-

ness on the present shaft he now runs; when Mr. Braidwood came to America, he was financially very poor, but with hard labor and good management, today he ranks as one of the successful miners of Braidwood.”

At the time of Woodruff's writing the above biography James and Ellen Braidwood may have been financially successful, but they had only 8 children left of the 12 that were born to them.

Braidwood was known to one and all as a fair man who paid decent wages. When the miners struck the large coal companies for better wages, Braidwood's shaft kept running. He became prosperous enough to build new home. We read in the September 25, 1874 Wilmington Advocate, “James Braidwood is erecting a large two-story building west of Odd Fellows Hall in Braidwood. The upper story will be occupied by

himself as dwelling and lower story is offered for rent for a store or meat market.”

Just 5 years later all of that came to an end. We read in the February 7, 1879 - Wilmington Advocate, “Died - In Braidwood, on Saturday, Feb 1st, of inflammation of the lungs, James Braidwood, aged 47 years.”

He left Ellen with a house full of children, the youngest was just 5 years of age. The oldest living son, John took over his father's business. But without his father's business sense, 4 months later the Braidwood Coal Company was in trouble.

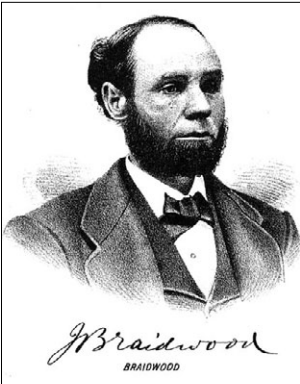
We read in the June 21, 1879 National Labor Tribune, “Braidwood shaft has shut down, owing to the failure to retain the contracts formerly held. James Braidwood, the former owner of the shaft, died some time since, leaving a large family of grown up boys, the eldes of whom, John, has run the shaft for the company since his father died, but the coal corporations have taken all his contracts from 25 to 50 cents a ton less than he had them for. This is another

evidence of the crushing out of individual enterprise through the power of monopoly. Will those who produce the wealth of the country never get their eyes opened to this monstrous evil - monopoly?”

Yes, like vultures the large coal companies, who could afford to lose a little money, had swooped down and out bid the Braidwood company on all their contracts.

And, in another twist we read in the June 21, 1879 - Joliet Weekly Sun, “Busted and Guttled - A dispatch from Braidwood says: The citizens of Braidwood were greatly surprised Friday morning by a report that the Braidwood Coal Company, of this city, had suspended work at their shaft.”

“The miners employed by the company, after realizing the actual facts in the case, proceeded at once to the store operated by the Braidwood company, on Main Street, and, finding that it was also closed, broke open the doors, entered the store in a body, in order to secure the goods, which they claimed rightfully belonging to



A PHOTO OF James Braidwood from the mid 1800s.



A PHOTO of a young Ellen Braidwood when she first started out in Braidwood.

them, in default of wages then due them, which in some cases amounted to quite a sum. Notwithstanding the efforts of Mr. John R. Braidwood, the manager of the company, and Constable Geddes and City Marshal Bain, the miners succeeded in carrying away several hundred dollars' worth of goods, principally groceries.”

“The stock in the store was valued at \$1,200 (about \$41,100), and Mr. Braidwood claims that he had intended to dispose of that for the benefit of the

men to whom he was indebted for wages, which would have left them nothing to complain of; but their action Friday morning precludes the possibility of any such arrangement.”

In the 1880 census, Ellen Braidwood is living in Braidwood with her 4 youngest children. Her sons John and Robert were at a boarding house in Chicago doing manual labor while her son Robert had gone west to Indian Territory to open a general store.

Scrap-A-Thon planned in Braidwood

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

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

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

Spread the word to friends and family about this event.

Donate blood for a chance at Hawaiian trip

The City of Braidwood will team up with Versiti Blood Centers to host a blood drive on Wednesday, March 26, from 2 to 6 p.m. in the classroom of the Braidwood Fire Department, 275 W. Main St.

To register visit www.donateblood.versiti.org and click on the “Donate

Now” link. You may also contact Josh Bolatto at (815) 458-2342 Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

While pre-registration is desirable, walks-ins are also welcome.

Every donor will be entered into a raffle for a chance to win a trip to Hawaii.

Fossil Ridge Library News

Adult Programs

Wednesday, March 19- Where's My Stuff: Learn from Professional Organizers. 6-7:30 p.m. As professional organizers and co-authors of the self-help book Beyond Tidy, Marie Limpert and Annmarie Brogan of Organize Me! of NY, LLC will teach unique and creative strategies to maximize space and stay in control of their belongings. They will also answer questions and organize solutions to common challenges that get people stuck.

Friday, March 21- Young at Heart: Tissue paper vase 2-3 p.m. Spring is here, but the temperatures don't reflect our warm spirits! We thought you might want a pop of color to remind you that warmer days are coming. Join us and create a bright vase to live up any room.

Monday, March 24- Fiction Addiction Book Club: 5:30-6:30 p.m. The book club meets monthly on the fourth Monday at 5:30 PM to discuss a book selected by one of the members. This group discusses a wide variety of books. Copies of the monthly book selections are available at the front desk for checkout. All readers are welcome to join! March's Title: The Newcomer by Mary Kay Andrews.

Wednesday, March 26- An evening with Christopher J. Lynch, author of the biography of Eddie Haskell: 6-7:30 p.m. Author Christopher J. Lynch will share his experiences in writing the biography of Ken Osmond, the actor who portrayed one of the most iconic television characters ever, Eddie Haskell, from the TV series Leave it to Beaver. Christopher will discuss

what inspired him to write about Eddie Haskell and how he was able to convince Mr. Osmond to allow him to write his life story when so many others had tried and failed.

Children Programs

Thursdays, March 20 & 27- Toddler Time, 10-11 a.m. We welcome toddlers and their caregivers to join us weekly to explore various toys and sensory materials. Toddlers can enhance their gross and fine motor skills, social interaction, and language skills. Caregivers must accompany their little ones throughout the program.

Monday, March 24- Kids can cook- Springtime treats: 5:30- 6:30 p.m. This program teaches children in 1st-5th grade essential food preparation and cooking skills while introducing them to the joys of nutritious and delicious food. Registration is required with a maximum of 20 children.

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

Wednesday, March 26 -Lap-Sit, 10-10:30 a.m. Let's instill a love of books in children from birth to three years old. This program is designed to introduce your child to the wonderful world of books. Caregiver participation and guidance are required as we read, sing, and do finger plays.

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

Reed-Custer High School Spring Sports Schedule

VARSITY BOYS BASEBALL

March 19.....	host Grant Park.....	4:30 p.m.
March 20.....	host Newark.....	4:30 p.m.
March 21.....	host Plano.....	4:30 p.m.
March 24.....	host GSW.....	4:30 p.m.
March 25.....	@Bishop Mac.....	4:30 p.m.
March 29.....	host Oakwood.....	10 a.m.
March 29.....	host El Pasos vs Oakwood.....	12 p.m.
March 29.....	host El Paso.....	2 p.m.
March 31.....	@Wilmington.....	4:30 p.m.
April 1.....	host Wilmington.....	4:30 p.m.
April 3.....	host Sandwich.....	4:30 p.m.
April 7.....	host Streator.....	4:30 p.m.
April 8.....	@Streator.....	4:30 p.m.
April 9.....	@Dwight.....	4:30 p.m.
p.m.April 12.....	@Pontiac.....	10 a.m.
April 12.....	@Pontiac vs Canton.....	12 p.m.
April 14.....	@Manteno.....	4:30 p.m.
April 15.....	host Manteno.....	4:30 p.m.
April 18.....	host Clifton Central.....	4:30 p.m.
April 21.....	host Herscher.....	4:30 p.m.
April 22.....	@Herscher.....	4:30 p.m.
April 23.....	@Beecher.....	4:30 p.m.
April 28.....	@Peotone.....	4:30 p.m.
April 29.....	host Peotone.....	4:30 p.m.
April 30.....	host Momence.....	4:30 p.m.
May 5.....	@Coal City.....	4:30 p.m.
May 6.....	host Coal City.....	4:30 p.m.
May 9.....	@Seneca.....	4:30 p.m.
May 10.....	@SJO Invite.....	9:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.
May 12.....	host Lisle.....	4:30 p.m.
May 13.....	@Lisle.....	4:30 p.m.
May 16.....	host Prairie Cent. Sr. night.....	4:30 p.m.
May 19.....	IHSA Regional.....	TBA

GIRLS VARSITY SOFTBALL

March 17.....	host Joliet Catholic.....	4:30 p.m.
March 19.....	host Grant Park.....	4:30 p.m.
March 20.....	host Newark.....	4:30 p.m.
March 24.....	host GSW.....	4:30 p.m.
March 28.....	@Beecher.....	4:30 p.m.
March 31.....	@Wilmington.....	4:30 p.m.
April 1.....	host Wilmington.....	4:30 p.m.
April 2.....	@Bishop Mac.....	4:30 p.m.
April 3.....	host Sandwich.....	4:30 p.m.
April 4.....	host Ottawa.....	4:30 p.m.
April 7.....	host Streator.....	4:30 p.m.
April 8.....	@Streator.....	4:30 p.m.
April 10.....	host Clifton Central.....	4:30 p.m.
April 11.....	host Dwight.....	4:30 p.m.
April 12.....	@Pontiac.....	10 a.m.
April 14.....	@Manteno.....	4:30 p.m.
April 15.....	host Manteno.....	4:30 p.m.
April 16.....	@Streator Woodland.....	4:30 p.m.
April 18.....	host Plano.....	4:30 p.m.
April 21.....	host Herscher.....	4:30 p.m.

GIRLS VARSITY SOFTBALL (CONT.)

April 22.....	@Herscher.....	4:30 p.m.
April 25.....	host Marquette Academy.....	4:30 p.m.
April 28.....	@Peotone.....	4:30 p.m.
April 29.....	host Peotone.....	4:30 p.m.
May 5.....	@Coal City.....	4:30 p.m.
May 6.....	host Coal City.....	4:30 p.m.
May 8.....	@Morris.....	4:30 p.m.
May 9.....	@Seneca.....	4:30 p.m.
May 12.....	host Lisle.....	4:30 p.m.
May 13.....	@Lisle.....	4:30 p.m.
May 16.....	host Prairie Cent. Senior night.....	4:30 p.m.
May 19.....	@IHSA Regionals.....	TBA

GIRLS VARSITY SOCCER

March 17.....	host Coal City NonCon.....	4:30 p.m.
March 18.....	host Ottawa.....	4:30 p.m.
March 20.....	host Kankakee.....	4:30 p.m.
March 27.....	host Beecher.....	4:30 p.m.
April 3.....	@Wilmington.....	4:30 p.m.
April 10.....	host Streator.....	5:30 p.m.
April 14.....	host Plano.....	5:30 p.m.
April 17.....	@Manteno.....	4:30 p.m.
April 21.....	host Indian Creek.....	5:30 p.m.
April 23.....	host Herscher.....	5:30 p.m.
April 24.....	@Peotone.....	4:30 p.m.
May 1.....	@Coal City.....	6:00 p.m.
May 5.....	host Bishop Mac.....	5:30 p.m.
May 8.....	host Lisle.....	5:30 p.m.
May 9.....	host Morris Senior night.....	5:30 p.m.
May 13.....	IHSA Regionals.....	TBA

BOYS/GIRLS TRACK AND FIELD

March 11.....	host Wilms./Dwight/Streator.....	4:30 p.m.
March 15.....	host Reed-Custer Invite.....	10 a.m.
March 18.....	host Herscher/Central/Tri-Point.....	4:30 p.m.
March 22.....	host Comet Classic Invite.....	10 a.m.
March 28.....	Prep Top Times @IWU.....	TBA
April 8.....	@Coal City W/Wilmington.....	4:30 p.m.
April 15.....	host Lisle W/Manteno.....	4:30 p.m.
April 18.....	@Seneca Invite.....	4 p.m.
April 22.....	host ICE Conf. Meet-JV.....	3 p.m.
April 28.....	@Seneca F/S invite.....	4 p.m.
May 2.....	@Herscher invite.....	4 p.m.
May 6.....	host Wilmington w/Clifton Central.....	4:30 p.m.
May 8.....	@ICE Conf Meet @Herscher.....	3 p.m.
May 14.....	Girls IHSA Sectionals.....	4 p.m.
May 21.....	Boys IHSA Sectionals.....	TBA
May 22.....	Girls IHSA State @EIU.....	TBA
May 24.....	Girls IHSA State @EIU.....	TBA
May 29.....	@EIU IHS State boys.....	TBA
May 31.....	@EIU IHSA State boys.....	TBA

Do your homework before voting

Dear Editor:

We hope that all Braidwood Residents evaluate candidates carefully and vote by April 1, 2025.

This is an open letter to provide input regarding what might be best for the April 1, Election!

The biggest question seems to be is there need for change in council members or should we continue with current council members.

To determine that answer it might be best to consider the following items.

1. Do we have transparency by current council members.
2. How is the city doing financially and what has the financial progress been?
3. Have we had growth in businesses coming to Braidwood which will result in more revenue for Braidwood?
4. What have business leaders and the city's accountant said about working with Braidwood and Braidwood's financial health?
5. What have individual council members done versus what new candidates have done for the city in the past two years?

Here is some information to consider about the above items.

1. Transparency by current Braidwood City Council members appears to be very high. All council members have expressed an openness to taking questions, getting email requests for information,

talking after meetings etc. In addition, Braidwood is doing something none of the other local communities are doing. They have been having multiple town hall meetings over the last two years. The town hall meetings give all the citizens an opportunity to come and ask questions to all their government officials. In addition, many of the Town Hall meetings have had guest speakers which have provided extensive information related to both the city's activities and the Town leaders.

2. Braidwood appears to be doing very well financially. Over the last few years, they have been increasing their total balance sheet by millions of dollars each year.

3. There had been significant business growth in Braidwood over the last few years. This includes businesses like Ultimate Rides, a new bank, and businesses preparing to build facilities like; A Travel Center with Car, Truck and eating facilities, two car dealerships both Ford & Chevrolet, and potentially a Data Center.

4. Business leaders like Doug Pryor, President of CED (Center for Economic Development), and the owners of the Ford and Chevrolet dealerships all have complimented the current city Administrator and city council for the job and working relationships they have had with them. The city accountant has

explained how well the city has done financially over the last few years and has rated our financial health a 10 out of 10 being one of the best that his company works with.

5. When considering what each candidate has done, you may want to consider who has been working on items to help plan for the city's future. The CMAP Plan is an instrumental effort and plan to help the city moving forward for the next ten years or more. All members of the current council were on the Steering committee for the CMAP Plan and did extensive work to assist the CMAP team in developing the plan.

With all the considerations above, it seems that the best interests of Braidwood would lean toward continuing with the current Council members, at least for the next two years to see if things continue to improve as they have been doing so well for the last two years.

All the information above can be verified by watching videos of the council meetings and town hall meetings ton the Braidwood website under the “Residents” tab and “Videos” tab.

Please do your homework and vote by April 1, 2025.

Ron Wilczak Sr.
Braidwood

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Kudos to Diamond

WILMINGTON—After reading last week's story about water and sewer rates I have to say the Village of Diamond does it right by giving residential water users a \$15 credit from money it gets from gaming. No wonder Diamond is getting all the growth with housing and new businesses. They have a Mayor and trustees who truly care about its residents. You don't see that in Wilmington.

More to come

SHADOW LAKES—It seems like Trump has been in office for an eternity. Since Trump took office again, the stock market has lost \$4 trillion. Food prices are still high. The massive deportation of illegals turned out to be a horse and pony show. Some of the naïve people who voted for him are already realizing that they probably made a mistake, but I've talked to some of the hard-core MAGAS and these people are still in denial. Trump is just getting started. I'm sure there's more to come. We get a lot of construction materials from Canada and a lot of our fruits and vegetables from Mexico. You can expect prices of houses and food to go up in the near future. But if you're believe the biggest con artist in the face of the world, we are living in the golden age of American.

Our country's shame

WILMINGTON—We always knew long ago that Trump was a coward when he refused to serve his country and a bully when he cheated his immigrant workers. Now Trump has blood on his hands as he shuts down aid to dying children and denies medical care to veterans who have shed their blood to guarantee our freedom. And it goes beyond the pale of decency when Trump insults the besieged leader of war-torn Ukraine and threatens our friendly neighbor Canada. Trump is indeed a disgusting human being and we look forward to the day when he gets his just dessert. Irene

Cutting government

COAL CITY—There's no denying whether you dislike Trump and/or Musk, they are doing what needs to be done. Government spending is out of control and the federal workforce is bloated. For four years Democrats kept adding more positions to government jobs without making sure they were sustainably funded. Now that those jobs are being called out the Democrat leaders are standing back and letting it happen because they know they couldn't get the job done themselves.

Where's the county?

RITCHIE—How much more in taxes will we have to pay to have decent roads? Now we have Wesley Township wanting a referendum passed to raise our taxes for road repairs. Where is Will County in all of this? When Gov. Pritzker doubled the gas tax by 18 cents years ago the Will County Board added 4 more cents onto it to improve roads in the county. Aren't Wesley roads still in Will County? We already pay the highest taxes in the country and it's never enough. As a senior citizen on a fixed income my vote is for no new tax increases.

Hail Canada

WILMINGTON—Cheers to Canadians as they pull off every American product sitting on their shelves. Hail to Canadians because Americans are proving to be pathetic for not standing up to Trump as he slashes jobs and Canadians have to show us how it's done. Don't Americans remember when the Clinton-Gore administration tuned up the bureau-

cracy carefully and methodically resulting in a resounding success as the budget was balanced four years straight (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001) and there was money left over to pay off some of the national debt? Vice President Gore wrote two books documenting the procedure and I obtained a copy from the public library. Americans should also be reminded of how Trump bungled his management of Covid by destroying Obama's recorded procedure of handling the ebola virus several years earlier. Our country gained worldwide respect when Obama sent medical teams to Africa to save lives when ebola flared up there. In contrast, Trump relishes in the agony of others so painfully obvious when he closed USAID and when he insulted Zelensky in the Oval Office debacle. The entire world is horrified at the kind of monster Trump is and how Americans could have ever elected such a demon.

Uncalled for behavior

BRAIDWOOD—After attending the meet and greet hosted at the library by one of the mayoral candidates my mind is made up on who to vote for. Watching a few Braidwood residents, whom I was informed are part of some sort of truth seeking group, acting in an extremely inappropriate manner towards some of the current elected officials seeking reelection, was enough for me. This event appeared to be an obvious trap of sorts to facilitate this uncalled for behavior. These individuals really need to learn how to act in an appropriate, respectable and adult manner instead of acting like a bunch of teenage children demanding their way.

Best interest on mind

SHADOW LAKES—There's someone that keeps posting here that Trump was elected by the people and that that's what the people wanted and to get over it. I have to disagree with that because I believe that the only reason a lot of people voted for Trump was because they were lied to. Trump used scare tactics, fear mongering, blaming the weak and the defenseless for problems that in some cases don't even exist. Trump promised to make America great again, food prices we're gonna come down immediately. Inflation was gonna end immediately. The list goes on, but the total opposite is happening. It's easy to see the plan cut government spending by firing essential government employees that are needed to provide the service that the American people need. And then the tax shift, lowering taxes for the wealthy of the country, but making up for it by charging tariffs to American imports. We, the consumers, will eventually end up paying the tariffs. Everybody knows that, everybody saying it thinks things are gonna get more expensive so that's the plan. There's people that are saying that Elon Musk and President Trump want to help the people, but if you look at the history of those two, you will find that they always had the means to help people. They're very wealthy. They could've made donations. They could've done a lot of things to help the needy but their past history chose the total opposite. The only thing we can hope for now is that come next election we can put some people in office that really have the American people's best interest in mind.

Class action suit

WILMINGTON—Water's Edge homeowners: As residents of Wilmington please consider a class action lawsuit. It is unfair to lose home value because the city allowed a truck stop to be built within city limits affecting your home values. I'm sure had it been known prior, most land owners would have never agreed to a front row seat overlooking our town's new addition. It's uncommon practice for such a busi-



ness to be placed within the footage area of a residential community. Seek help with your losses. Until then fight the traffic and enjoy your view. It's gonna be a beautiful thing.

Lying liar at the top

BRAIDWOOD—As one judge after another told Trump he cannot fire a federal worker unless he has legitimate cause, Trump continued to slash. Then the judges commanded Trump's lawyers to testify honestly and under oath which changed the situation somewhat and some workers got their jobs back. Are we surprised that Trump was unfair to federal workers? Of course not, considering that Trump is a pathological liar as well as a despicable man, a corrupt president and if you were dumb enough to believe him you deserve to suffer at his hands. Trump's lies in his first term were recorded at 30,000 so recent voters last November knew of Trump's duplicity and knew better than to vote for him. Perhaps the appropriate question is how naive, how ignorant, how complicit are these recent Trump voters with Trump's gutting of America? If this situation persists, some of us will be happy to move to Canada, some belong in cruel Russia and the undecided should stay here to deal with the madness.

Union support

BRAIDWOOD—It was recently announced that sergeants and patrol officers on the Braidwood Police Department voted to support Braidwood's current Mayor Hart. But, to put it in a different prospective, in theory, they voted in no confidence of their former leader. This should speak tremendous volumes to Braidwood residents and proud union households, then there's an even bigger problem. Kudos to all of the sergeants and patrol officers for speaking up.

Town halls needed

WILMINGTON—Considering that Republican town halls have been forbidden shows how effective they were. So we need Democratic leadership to fill the gap, carry on and hold their own version of town halls to give ordinary people a voice. Bernie Sanders and AOC have been doing just that and doing a great job. And we need more of them. I have called my representatives and barely am able to talk to a human. Am I discouraged? No, I will keep trying because if Trump continues at this rate, any one of us will be arrested for holding up a sign Trump doesn't like. Free speech and freedom of the press is disappearing. And in practical terms we'll be able to afford groceries and a visit to the doctor under Trump's slash of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid? Dear fellow citizens, take action no matter what your party because we are threatened like never before in our nation's history.

Squeaky clean

BRAIDWOOD—For those who keep on saying that they have not heard Mayoral candidate Mr. Lyons say one bad thing about his opponents, the reason that you haven't is because there are plenty of other people doing that for him. Why should he make himself look bad when others are taking care of the dirty work for him? Same goes for Mayoral candidate Mrs. Hart. We haven't heard her say anything bad either because she has people doing it for her. Candidates come out smelling squeaky clean when they themselves aren't the ones stirring the pot and throwing the mud.

What's that odor?

BRAIDWOOD—I have heard from multiple people that a certain one of our current commissioners, while at functions or council meetings, their breath has a strong odor as if they have been drinking. That's very inappropriate for an elected official and this council should address this issue.

Will you resign?

BRAIDWOOD — Commissioner Walsh, since you like to publicly defend our administrator's actions, my question is if Mr. Lyons is elected, he wants to perform a forensic investigation into any wrongdoings this administrator has done and if that investigation proves you wrong you should resign as commissioner.

My language

If we are going to adopt an official language I think it should be American. I am proud that my ancestors fought for my freedom from the United Kingdom in

America and Ireland. I won't be forced to speak a foreign language. No matter what any government decides. I use a flashlight not a torch. My car has a hood and a trunk, not a bonnet and a boot. I ride in elevators, not lifts. I eat cookies and candy, not biscuits and sweets. My children had buggies, not prams. My communications come in the mail not the post. I eat potato chips, not crisps. Gas prices are high here, not petrol prices. The Bears are not playing soccer, they're playing football. People disappear here, they don't go missing. I enjoy learning foreign languages, but I won't adopt any language except American. Each country of my ancestors fought long and bloody wars to gain the honor.

American Irish Colleen

Crybabies

WILMINGTON—A friend recently claimed that white males are under attack by the woke in this country. First, no. Second, this is a classic trope of the right wingers. They need to blame their failures on anything but themselves. It is the liberal media or Hollywood or the universities that are against them. For all their macho bluster they are really just a bunch of whiney crybabies who refuse to look inward and see they have bad ideas that don't appeal to the masses. A lot of them are racist, anti-woman and afraid of anyone who doesn't look or sound like them. They demand conformity of thought and only as much freedom as they need. Third, the last time I checked 46 out of the 47 presidents have been white men. This country is still being run by mostly white men. So to my friend I suggest grow up. Penny Lane

Talking trash

BRAIDWOOD—I went for a walk and was in shock as to the amount of trash all over town. By trash I mean boxes, plastic bottles, etc. just laying around in ditches, tree lines, against fences. Who is responsible for all the line locating flags that are just lying on the side of the road? The homeowner, the city, the contractor? I understand its winter and we have had some very windy conditions. The town now has a beautification committee. Is it their job to clean this up? I would think so. The town is just not Main Street. Maybe the city employees could pick it up during their down time. Where is our code enforcer? In some areas of town you can't walk on the sidewalk without getting hit with branches from trees and brushes. Now some are going to come back with "it's the homeowner's responsibility to clean up their yard." Yes, that is true, however sometimes people need a little encouragement. We all want the town to look beautiful. Here's a suggestion. Even if it's not your trash, just pick it up.

Accomplished nothing

WILMINGTON—In response to Penny Lane: Do you have proof that Biden was running the country? No, Obama was. The presidency operated without a real president with the House Oversight Project saying "Whoever controlled the autopen, controlled the Presidency." Therefore, I can have my opinions. I am no more critical than you or others giving opinions. I know who The Five are. I also know who Rachel Maddow, Joy Reid, and Morning Joe are on MSNBC, or other commentators on CNN, and on and on it goes. They spew uninformed comments similar to yours. Gas prices are coming down. Less than \$3 gallon on Lorenzo Rd, Joliet, and Bourbonnais. You will have to ask the locals why prices are high in the area. Inflation is bad because the Dems caused it. War is happening because the Dems allowed it. Spare me all the theatrics in their scripted videos all sent out in unison. They accomplished nothing for the American people under Biden. Bankruptcy is a common practice. If it is legal and necessary why not take advantage of it? Lots of corruption in the Biden crime family and that entire administration. Why would you pardon your family when no charges have yet been brought forward? All these Soros funded left wing judges are a disgrace. Can't investigate because of their so called legal blockades. The level of willful ignorance, gaslighting, and delusion which the left pushes is exhausting. They flip and flop, cry, protest, march, chant, hold signs, and act like children when they don't get their way or things don't align with their agenda. We can continue to agree to disagree, but the Democratic party that I once knew is no more. It died when John Kennedy died.

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MEMBERS OF THE Wesley 4-H Hustlers help to keep North Kankakee Street free of litter during one of their roadside clean-up events. The local youth organization has been recognized by the state for its community service.

Wesley 4-H Hustlers win state award for community service

The youth of the Wesley 4-H Hustlers received an award from the Illinois 4-H Association for their community service efforts.

In keeping with the 4-H motto of "To Make the Best Better"; the Wesley 4-H Hustlers have long focused on service to their surroundings as individuals, and as a club. During the year of 2024, this 4-H club has helped in many functions and with many different groups across southern Will County, and across the State of Illinois.

Locally, the Wesley 4-H Hustlers have a section of Kankakee Street, in Wilmington that they adopted to clean-up several times a year.

The club has also assisted the Wilmington Lions Club with their Easter Egg Hunt, and Island Christmas Lights Display.

They also assisted the Wilmington Area Healthy Community Coalition with their National Drug Take Back Day, as well as helping Kuzma Care with several packing events and also securing a grant to provide food to the local pantry.

At the state level the Wesley 4-H Hustlers helped with the state 4-H campaign to help fight food insecurities with raising funds and helping Will County place in the top five for most donated food during the Illinois 4-H Can Hunger food drive.

Working to fight food insecurities has been a mission of the Wesley 4-H Hustlers club as they still maintain a micro-pantry at 600 W. Baltimore Street in Wilmington; along with helping fill other micro-pantries in Braidwood and Braceville.

This award would not

be possible if it weren't for the partnering clubs, committees, associations, and other volunteers across southern Will County that have worked with the youth of this 4-H club. Part of the award for the community service efforts is a monetary contribution to the club so they can continue their efforts of community service in southern Will County.

The Wesley 4-H Hustlers is one of the oldest continuously operating 4-H clubs within the State of Illinois; dating back to 1928. This club was formed in Wesley Township, and today is based out of Wilmington.

The primary area of focus for this youth organization is Wilmington, Wesley, Florence, Reed, and Custer Townships in Southern Will County, but is open to all individuals regardless of location of residence.

4-H programs empower nearly six million young people across the U.S. through experiences that develop critical life skills. 4-H is the youth development program of our nation's Cooperative Extension System and USDA, and serves every county and parish in the U.S. through a network of 110 public universities and more than 3000 local Extension offices.

Learn more about 4-H at www.4-H.org, find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/4-H.

Wilmington Library to hold used book sale

The Wilmington Public Library District will be holding a used book sale Saturday, March 22 and Sunday, March 23.

The sale will run from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Saturday and from noon until 4 p.m. on Sunday. Books will be sold for \$3 a bag, and the library will provide the bag.

Donations of clean, smoke-free books and

DVDs for the book sale will be accepted March 17 through March 21, with a limit of one box donated per patron due to space limitations.

The library kindly asked for books free of mold, dirt, and smoke damage. No encyclopedias, VHS, outdated medical & text books or other obsolete materials will be accepted.



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The Joliet American Legion Band will be performing their Annual Spring Concert April 6th

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Joliet's Old Central Church, 15 S. Richards Street

Doors open at 2:15 with refreshments available as well as an opportunity to purchase tickets for a wide array of raffle baskets and placing bids on silent auction items.

At 3:00 the concert commences

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conjunction with associate director Jill Kohler

taking to the podium during the performance.

Tickets will be available on Tuesday April 1st prior to band rehearsal

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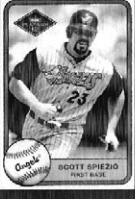
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Workers rack up overtime while mass transit agencies face 'fiscal cliff'

Most weeks I use this newspaper column to highlight a story that's appeared in my subscriber newsletter Capitol Fax. This week will be no different, but today's column was written by my associate Isabel Miller:



Rich Miller

Rep. Marty Moylan (D-Des Plaines) recently told me he was "astonished" by some Chicago Transit Authority employee paychecks.

Rep. Moylan, the Chair of the House Transportation: Rail Systems, Roads & Bridges Committee, is heading into the transit funding discussions armed with an inch-and-a-half-thick binder filled with CTA salary data.

The agency's gross payroll for all employees in 2024 was close to a billion dollars.

Eight unionized CTA workers made more than \$300,000 last year, and about 160 made more than \$200,000, according to documentation posted online by the Regional Transportation Authority.

One of the CTA's top-paid employees, a line worker with a base pay of \$62.10 an hour, earned \$347,363.11 in 2024. Normally he'd earn \$129,168 per year for a standard 40-hour work week. To reach his 2024 total payout, the line worker would have had to work an extra 45 hours each and every week at time-and-a-half or an extra 34 hours at double-time every week to reach his final 2024 income level.

These are all rough estimates which don't account for on-call/standby payments, holidays, vacations or bonus pay.

An ironworker was paid \$287,602.34 at \$59.26 per hour last year. That employee would've had to work an extra 35 hours at time-and-a-half or 27 hours at double-time each and every week.

Another employee, a customer service representative earning \$40.38 per hour, was paid \$273,593.30, putting them at an extra 60 hours per week at time-and-a-half or an extra 45 hours every week at double-time.

The Chicago area's mass transit agencies are facing a combined "fiscal cliff" of \$730 million in Fiscal Year 2026 that will rise to \$1.2 billion over the following five years. But, declared Moylan, "This is going to be very hard for them to make the case that they need a billion dollars if there is no accountability on overtime."

"I think there's vast amounts of mismanagement here," Moylan said. "Some people are taking advantage of the system. We need to get to the bottom of this, especially if they're asking for a billion dollars."

Rep. Moylan said he wants more transparency on overtime, including an explanation for why supervisors are signing off on so much of it.

Last month, Moylan submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to each transit agency

requesting the total amount paid for overtime, remote work and their operating budgets. Moylan claimed he's heard some workers are "getting overtime for [being on] standby for 12 hours a day."

A CTA spokesperson denied Moylan's claim, stating no CTA employee is "ever paid time-and-a-half or double-time to be on standby," adding, "A limited number of employees are strategically deployed at targeted times to be on call as needed to maximize service delivery to customers."

Moylan said the CTA must change "immediately." He has repeatedly said in the past that he will not call any transit bill for a vote without significant agency reforms.

"We've had numerous complaints about [train safety], they're not clean, there's smoking, crime," Rep. Moylan said.

Chicago Federation of Labor President Bob Reiter told the Senate Transportation Committee later in the week that the CTA needs better management and coordination and more workers to reduce reliance on overtime.

"Overtime is driven by not having enough folks to do those services," Reiter said. "Believe me, the amount of overtime you have to work to make the kind of money that people say is like 'Oh my gosh,' and get sticker shock. That person's making a lot of sacrifice in their personal life."

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 308 President Pennie McCoach followed up by telling the committee that CTA employees are often "pretty much forced to stay beyond their shifts."

"[It's the] policy that is put in place by CTA. If you are working eight hours and the next person doesn't come to work, then you're forced to stay there another eight hours, so it's more so the policy of CTA, not the workers," McCoach said.

The CTA spokesperson described the CTA as a "lean and efficient" organization and said the CTA has the lowest operating cost per vehicle revenue hour and lowest public funding per trip compared to its peer agencies.

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

Gas prices rise locally but decline elsewhere

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have risen 4.2 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.22/g Sunday, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Prices in Illinois are 3.1 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 46.0 cents per gallon lower than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has decreased 5.0 cents in the last week and stands at \$3.558 per gallon.

Locally, you can still find fairly cheap gas, but prices are edging up.

In Wilmington, expect to pay anywhere from \$2.89/g at Mohsen's up to \$3.22 at Circle K. Braidwood ran the gamut from \$3.19/g at Marathon to \$3.28/g at Circle K. Coal City offers gas from \$3.12/g at Shell, to \$3.15/g at BP.

In Morris, prices are high, with gas at \$3.24/g at Circle K to \$3.25/g at Citgo.

Finally, Bourbonnais has gas for \$2.94/g at Gas N Wash, up to \$3.17/g at Circle K.

"As concerns over tariffs and policy uncertainties grow, gas prices have continued to decline across much of the country, raising the possibility that the national average could slip below \$3 per gallon and approach some of the lowest prices seen in years," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"However, this decline shouldn't necessarily be celebrated, as it comes with strong warning signs. When the economy slows, gasoline demand drops—along with demand for other refined products like diesel and jet fuel. We've already seen some signals that the months ahead could be challenging. All of this suggests that gas prices are likely to remain low for now. However, if economic conditions improve, gas prices could eventually follow suit and start rising again."

The lowest price in the state was \$2.74/g while the highest was \$4.49/g.

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Braidwood Food Pantry at Community Care Center. Open Tuesdays 8 to 11:45 a.m. 112 S. Center Street, Braidwood. Information: 815-325-0779

Ignite Christian Church, 1180 W 1st St. Braidwood. Micro-pantry open 24 hours front of church Info: (815)-390-5040

Top Fuel Saloon Food Pantry. Open Fridays from 3 to 4 p.m. 275 S. Hickory St., Braidwood.

Coal City Food Pantry at Coal City United Methodist Church. (Use

south entrance)Closed all federal holidays. Open Mondays 9-11 a.m. and Thursdays 1-3 p.m. 6805 E. McArdle Road, Coal City. Information: 815-216-3288.

We Care of Grundy County Food Pantry. Office Hours: Mon.-Wed. and Fri.: 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1:00-4:00 p.m. Pantry Hours: Monday-Friday 1:00-3:00 by appointment. Please call to schedule your time to come 815-942-6389. 530 Bedford Rd., Morris. Information: 815-942-6389

Kuzma Care Cottage, food pantry. 635 S. Main Street, Wilmington. Hours: M-F 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. and the 2nd Saturday of each month, 8-11 a.m. 815-476-2030

Local Meals:

St. Vincent Table hot meals are offered at various locations throughout the year. Here are the months and locations for 2025. Hours for pick-up for shut ins 4-4:30 p.m. Eat in start 4:30 until 5:30 p.m.

March-April 2025: Assumption of the BVM, 180 S Kankakee St., Coal City.

May-July 2025: New Hope Presbyterian Church, 80 N. Garfield St Coal City.

Aug.-Oct. 2025: Immaculate Conception Church, 110 S School St Braidwood.

Nov. 2025: Assumption of the BVM, 180 S Kankakee St Coal City.

December 2025: CC First Baptist Church, 4470 E Rt 113 Mazon.

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign announced Fall dean's list and graduates

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign announced Dean's List honorees and graduates for the fall semester 2024, and the graduates for August 2024.

Dean's List eligibility is limited to the top 20% of a student's college class or curriculum. To be eligible for the Dean's List recognition, students must complete at least 12 academic semester hours taken for a letter grade.

Local students named to dean's list include: Victoria Ferrara of Coal City, Madison Holcomb of Diamond and Joshua Stockin of Wilmington.

Local graduates include: Jacob Heisner of Braidwood, Payton Hutchings of Coal City, Jessica Ambrose and Maxwell Pinski both of Wilmington.

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Trout season opens April 5

Catch and release at Rock Creek starts Saturday

The 2025 Illinois Spring Trout fishing season is coming to three area locations starting Saturday, April 5.

Bird Park Quarry in Kankakee, Rock Creek in Kankakee River State Park and Lake Milliken in the Des Plaines Conservation Area, Wilmington will all be stocked with rainbow trout.

Rock Creek will open for catch and release-only fishing on March 15. On April 5 trout may be kept to eat.

Anglers will need both a fishing license and an Inland Trout Stamp to participate, unless they are under the age of 16, blind, disabled or are an Illinois resident on leave from active duty in the Armed Forces.

Licenses and trout

stamps are available for purchase on the Illinois Department of Resources (IDNR) website and at DNR Direct license and permit locations, including Angelo's Outdoor Sports in Wilmington.

The trout fishing at Milliken Lake is allowed at 5 a.m. on April 5. Anyone attempting to take trout before the legal harvest season opening will be issued citations.

The IDNR stocks more than 80,000 rainbow trout each year, with 58 ponds, lakes and streams throughout the state being stocked for the spring season, and an additional 80,000 trout stocked for the fall season.

For more information on trout seasons and other Illinois fishing opportunities, check the website at www.ifishillinois.org.

The state reminds sportsmen that new licenses are required April 1 for the 2025 year.

Have a plan when pruning your trees

According to experts at the Arboretum's Plant Clinic, which offers free tree and plant advice for the public, the best time to prune most trees in the Chicagoland region is from mid-February to early May, as they heal more efficiently during this period.

However, there are a few exceptions, said Plant Clinic Manager Spencer Campbell.

"We have traditionally recommended pruning oaks and elms between Oct. 15 and April 15 to avoid overlapping with bark beetles that spread diseases like oak wilt and Dutch elm disease," Campbell said.

"However, in years with warmer-than-average spring temperatures, these pests may become active earlier, making it necessary to stop pruning even before April 15. It's best to plan your pruning for these

species now, or you may need to wait until fall to complete it."

Meanwhile, maples, walnuts, birches, beeches, hornbeams and yellow-wood produce heavy sap flow when pruned in early spring. "While this 'bleeding' is not harmful, it can be avoided by waiting until after leaves have fully emerged later in the spring," Campbell said.

Spring-flowering shrubs such as viburnums and lilacs should be pruned after their blooms fade and the flowers drop. Storm-damaged and dead branches always should be removed promptly to prevent hazards and encourage proper wound closure.

The Plant Clinic is available to provide tree pruning and other plant care advice by phone at 630-719-2424, email at plantclinic@mortonarb.org.

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Jerome Panzer



WILMINGTON—Jerome "Jerry" Joel Panzer, 85, of Wilmington, and formerly of Summit, IL, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, March 12, 2025.

Born Feb. 10, 1940, in Oak Park, IL, Jerome was the son of Joseph R. and Frances (Haarbauer) Panzer. He was raised and educated in Summit Argo and proudly served his country in the United States Army during the Vietnam era (1963-1965). Jerome dedicated 34 years of service to CPC International before retiring. An avid outdoorsman, he found joy in hunting and fishing, cherishing the peace and adventure they brought.

Fierce protector and provider of his family, Jerome Panzer was the foundation upon which his family stood solid and rooted in this world. Putting family above all else, Jerome took care of everything, always, for his girls. Dad lived his life and instilled in us "family first." This is especially evident in Dad's selfless act of true love: for the past two years, he devoted his life to caring for our mother 24/7, putting her life and needs before his own.

A man of great integrity and strength, Jerome provided his children and grandchildren with the best example of what it means to be a man. He derived such joy from spending time with his grandchildren—fishing, exploring, playing, teaching, relaxing—loving them and loving hearing about them. An outdoorsman through and through, Jerome was deeply connected to God's creation, the natural world. The eagle, the sandhill cranes, the cardinal, the ducks, the pheasants, the fish, the deer, the racoons, the prairie, the forest, the river ... all can attest: the man was connected. Jerome placed great faith in nature, and he placed great faith in letting nature take its course.

A firm believer in keeping things simple, Dad would remind us to take "one thing at a time and go from there." Dad was a man of conviction and a champion for what is right and true in this world. A straight shooter who would not tolerate any BS, Dad would call it out immediately, and set the record straight. And we'd go from there.

Jerome never wanted to see anything suffer; he possessed a deep and pure caring for the people and animals in his life. His beloved dog Ottawa and his cat Boomer are surely wagging and purring for him in Heaven. His devoted cat Max here on earth kept constant vigil for Dad, curling up next to him in Dad's final days. A proud United States Army Veteran, Jerome's patriotism shone bright as he flew the glorious American flag in the front lawn of the loving homesteads he built. Dad also took great pride in serving on the



Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery Memorial squad; the Thursday squad, the Board, and the friendships forged there, always held a special place in Dad's heart. Jerome lived his life with integrity, grace, honor, and goodness.

With Dad's connectedness and passion for living a meaningful and enjoyable life, it is no surprise that he was an exceptional dancer, a natural. He and our mother were quite the pair on the dance floor, and the joy was contagious. One was lucky to dance with Dad; his fancy footwork uniquely his and a joy to behold – his attentiveness to his dance partner always apparent.

Jerome loved a good joke, and when you saw that twinkle in his eye, you knew the laughter and fun that would soon follow. Saying grace at holiday dinners always ended with Grandpa saying, "Rub-a-dub let's eat this grub!" The best combination of deep connectedness and levity; of stoicism and humor; of passion and pragmatism, Dad is truly one for the ages. We are so very fortunate and blessed to have had him as our father, grandfather, leader, and friend. A true pioneer man, Jerome Panzer leaves a legacy of pure love, staunch integrity, everlasting commitment, and indomitable strength. The Panzer family are blessed to have this giant of a man and his spirit with us always. And we his children and grandchildren are with him always, as well. Thank you for everything, Dad. Godspeed.

Survivors include his loving wife, Margaret "Peg" Panzer; three children: Joy (Alan) Schmit, of Westchester, IL; Ginger (Russ) Diven, of Hoffman Estates, IL and Christie Panzer, of Tennessee; and seven grandchildren: Blake Rivera, Audrey Soto, Dane Soto, Colson Schmit, Sam Schmit, Kyle Diven and Margaret Schmit.

Jerome was preceded in death by his parents and his five brothers.

Per Jerome's wishes, cremation rites have been accorded. Family and friends will assemble at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd., in Wilmington on Thursday, March 27, 2025 at 1:30 p.m. A funeral procession will depart at 2 p.m. for private ceremony at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, where Jerome will be laid to rest with full military honors.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Jerome's memory to Operation Smile Cleft Lip and Palate Organization.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.BaskervilleFuneral.com to sign the online guest book.

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

Donald Frey

COAL CITY—Donald J. Frey, 89, of Coal City, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at Lightways Hospice Home in Joliet.

Born on Feb. 8, 1936, in Newport, MI, Don was a twin son of Clifford and Pearl (Nadeau) Frey. He was raised in Newport and attended Monroe Catholic Central High School.

In the early 1980s, Don made Coal City his home, where he became a beloved fixture in the community. In 1987, he purchased PJ's Tavern, transforming it into Don's Beer Store, which he proudly owned and operated for nearly the past four decades. His business was more than just a place to grab a drink, it was a gathering spot where friendships were formed, laughter was shared, and memories were made.

A lifelong sports enthusiast, Don enjoyed playing softball in his younger years and found joy in canoeing and fishing. One of his happiest places was at the corner of his bar, surrounded by good company, watching multiple games at once, and enjoying a cold beer. Don's generous spirit and kind heart defined him. He never hesitated to lend a hand to someone in need. His warmth, integrity, and unwavering support of his community



earned him the respect and admiration of all who knew him.

Don will be deeply missed but fondly remembered by his family, friends, and the many lives he touched throughout his years.

Survivors include his wife of 24 years, Beverly; three children: Don, Mike and Cheryl; grandchildren: Tyler, Trent, Jake, Luke and Nick and two great grandchildren: Olivia and Otto. In addition, Don is survived by Bev's family; children: Peggy, Randy and Bill, and grandchildren: Shain, Brittany, Jasmin, Nolan, Darcy, Dillon, Collin and Josh.

Don was preceded in death by his parents; twin brother, Ray, and four sisters: Marion, Leona, Marie and Bernice.

Per Don's wishes, cremation rites have been accorded, and a celebration of his life will be held in the bar at a date to be announced.

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

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

Jean Ann Stainbrook

WILMINGTON—Jean Ann Stainbrook, 92, of Wilmington, passed away peacefully on Monday afternoon, March 10, 2025, at Eden Vista of Rock Run in Joliet.

Born Aug. 4, 1932, in Chicago, Jean Ann was the daughter of John and Lucille (Bertino) Parkinson. She was raised and educated in Wilmington, where she graduated from Wilmington High School.

Jean dedicated 20 years of service as an administrative assistant for the Army Procurement and Supply Agency at the Joliet Arsenal (APSA) before transitioning to owning and operating the J-Bar Western Shop, from where she later retired following more than three decades.

Her passion for horses and livestock shaped much of her life. She was actively involved in numerous horse clubs and associations, including Land of Lincoln GBRA, AQHA, ILBRA, and IPRA. In 1958, Jean made history as one of the first Rodeo Queens in Illinois and was a lifetime gold card member of the International Professional Rodeo Association. This was simply a testament to her dedication and impact in the rodeo community. Her impressive resume in the show arena led to additional opportunities, including being featured in a magazine representing Purina Feeds, as well as countless other magazine and newspaper articles highlighting her accomplishments and unwavering devotion to her horses.

Jean will be forever remembered for her kindness, dedication, and deep love for both the animals she cherished and the people whose lives she touched.



Survivors include her step-daughter, Dolores Kaitschuck; grandson, Dale (Tammie) Rawls; great grandchildren: Kodi and Cheyenne; one niece, Linda Raridon-Duke; and great niece, Kaylin (Austin) Kuiper of Lake Village, IN; as well as numerous Stainbrook nieces, nephews, great nieces and great nephews.

Jean was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Harold Stainbrook on September 29, 2019, nephew, Craig Raridon, her sister, Joan (Dell) Raridon, and brother-in-law, Bob (Marie) Stainbrook.

The family will receive friends at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 East Kahler Road, in Wilmington on Monday, March 17, 2025 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Funeral services will follow in the funeral home on Tuesday, March 18, 2025 at 12:15 p.m. with Reverend Dr. Roy Backus officiating.

Burial will follow in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL, where Jean will be laid to rest with her late husband, Harold.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Jean's memory to the Wilmington School District Foundation of Excellence for a future scholarship or to Kuzma Care Cottage or Wilmington's Caring Closet.

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

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

Illinois could become leader in sustainable aviation fuel

BY KEVIN BESSLER
THE CENTER SQUARE

Corn and soybean farmers in Illinois look to benefit from another byproduct of their fields.

Sustainable aviation fuel, or SAF, is made from non-petroleum feedstocks that reduces emissions from air transportation. It takes about 1.5 gallons of ethanol to make one gallon of sustainable aviation fuel.

All conventional aircraft are capable of flying on a maximum 50% blend of SAF and jet fuel. However, by 2030, it is expected that a large portion of airplanes will be capable of flying with up to 100% SAF.

At the recent

Sustainable Aviation Fuel and Beyond Conference in Rosemont, IL Gov. J.B. Pritzker said the state is positioned to be a major player in the aviation fuel producing market.

"The ecosystem that we've built for sustainable fuel development is really second to none," said Pritzker. "From agricultural commodities to refiners to consumers, Illinois is a leader at every step of the sustainable fuel supply chain."

Last year, United Airlines announced plans to purchase one million gallons of sustainable jet fuel at O'Hare International Airport. O'Hare is the fifth airport in the world where United has purchased SAF for operational use. JetBlue

is currently using SAF at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York.

The Department of Energy set a goal to achieve 3 billion gallons of SAF production by 2030, and 35 billion gallons by 2050. To qualify for United States federal tax credits, SAF must meet a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Dave Loos, director of Biofuels and Research with the Illinois Corn Growers Association, says the state is well positioned to take advantage of the SAF market.

"The feedstock is there and our ethanol plants are set up to produce much more than we're producing now," said Loos.

Free seminar to focus on building muscle

Morris Hospital and the Morris Hospital YMCA are teaming up to offer a free nutrition seminar, "How to Build Muscle with Protein Intake," on Wednesday, March 26, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Morris Hospital YMCA, 2200 W. Dupont Avenue, Morris. The program is open to anyone.

During the seminar, a Morris Hospital registered dietitian will discuss the importance of protein intake and provide examples of foods that are rich in protein, with a focus on gaining

muscle and weight.

Nutrition seminars led by Morris Hospital dietitians are offered monthly at the YMCA to provide the knowledge and tools needed to make lasting, healthy changes in eating habits.

Community members can register for the entire series or choose the topics of interest.

To register, call Morris Hospital's Wellness Manager at 815-705-7358 or go to www.morrishospital.org events and select the Nutrition category.

Commentary

How the governor can create a fairy-tale ending

BY BRAD WEISENSTEIN
ILLINOIS POLICY INSTITUTE

So, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker has nobody but himself to blame for this one: he opened the book and pointed to a fairy tale as he presented his fiscal year 2026 state budget.

"There is a whole industry of backseat belly-achers in this state and around the country who make a profession out of rhetorically tearing down Illinois and suggesting that if we would just enact one of their magic-bean fixes we would never face another difficult budget year," Pritzker said Feb. 19. "But if there's one thing I've learned as governor – there are no magic-bean fixes."

Sorry, governor, but some of us backseat belly-achers believe in magic beans and know the story of "J.B. and the Beanstalk" ends with an ax.

You see, Illinois has a massive spending problem that grows and grows every year, reaching the sky. Pritzker wants to spend

\$55.2 billion in the fiscal year starting July 1, which is \$2 billion more than the current fiscal year and \$16.7 billion more than before he landed in the enchanted city of Springfield.

He wants to spend \$78 million in 2026 to boost state worker pensions for those hired after 2010. State lawmakers put new employees on a generous yet curtailed pension system called Tier 2, because the overly-generous benefits handed to older workers were bankrupting the state.

Government unions have pushed to boost Tier 2 and now they have some state lawmakers, whom they support with generous campaign contributions, ready to use a potential problem with a federal rule to make the change.

Trouble is, no one has studied whether Illinois really is violating the rule, which says public pensions must at least be as generous as Social Security. So Pritzker and some in the

Statehouse are ready to fix something we don't know is a problem by spending an unknown amount of taxes that experts project will add \$13 billion in benefits.

Adding benefits when state leaders already have taxpayers liable for \$143.7 billion in unmet pension debt is just foolish as well as irresponsible.

Pritzker's other issue is guessing at how much money he can spend. The governor's own prognosticators in November said Pritzker faced a \$3 billion deficit and no revenue growth. Next, Pritzker delivers his budget Feb. 19 and magically finds \$1.5 billion in extra state revenues.

Then the lawmakers' crystal ball says, "outlook not so good." In late February they said Pritzker's budget might be as much as \$1.2 billion in the hole, depending on whether his plan for delinquent tax collections, shorting the road fund and boosting gambling taxes all work out.

Pritzker refused to call \$100 million in higher gambling taxes a tax hike. He calls it "revenue enhancement." His euphemism and other gimmicks are all so he can publicly declare he's not raising taxes. But when the gloomy predictions come true, he's short on cash and needs more, where will the money come from?

Likely from the same place it always comes from in Pritzkerland: you, and higher taxes.

Pritzker's string of record-setting budgets have repeatedly been propped up by tax hikes. His first three years brought \$5.24 billion in higher taxes and fees. This year's spending is supported by more than \$1.1 billion in tax hikes. All those new taxes, yet between 2000 and 2022 spending on core services dropped 20%, when adjusted for inflation, as total state spending increased by 21%.

Now for the magic-bean fixes.

Bean 1. Tie state

spending to the state's gross domestic product. Had Illinois done so in 2019, we'd already have saved \$27 billion, including \$6 billion for the current fiscal year.

Bean 2. Get state worker health benefits under control. Pritzker in 2019 handed state unions health coverage worth \$3.6 billion more than he had to. They enjoy benefits most working stiff's cannot get and pay for 16% of the cost while taxpayers average 42% of their own health coverage costs.

Bean 3. Consolidate school district administration. Illinois has about 860 school districts, and about half have only one or two schools. That drives administration costs at the district level to \$552 per student – money that never reaches the students in the classroom and is one of the highest rates in the nation. Reducing the excessive number of districts by 25% would cut overhead and save nearly \$273 million a year without closing a single school.

Bean 4. Fix Illinois' government pensions – and stop adding to the problem. The Illinois Constitution has been interpreted as prohibiting any changes to public pensions. The constitution needs to be amended, meaning a statewide vote, to allow control of future growth. An analysis in 2023 showed controlling pension growth could save over \$50 billion by 2045.

We can't afford to grow that \$143.7 billion pension debt, which comes out to over \$11,300 that each Illinoisan will someday be forced to pay.

There's no magic involved, but there certainly needs to be brave heroes with the political will to stand up for taxpayers and against government union special interests. And again, this tale ends with mighty swings of a sharp budget ax.

Brad Weisenstein is the managing editor of the Illinois Policy Institute, a nonpartisan group working to expand liberties and prosperity in Illinois.

Habitat loss taking a heavy toll on prairie dogs

Dear EarthTalk: Are prairie dogs threatened or endangered these days?
- Joseph P, via email



Prairie dogs play a key role in grassland ecosystems but encounter many threats. These cute 18" tall tan rodents live in small pockets of habitat across 10 western U.S. states: Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming. However, they are now extinct in Arizona. Roughly half of the U.S. population is in South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming. As keystone species—those whose presence is critical for the balance and health of their ecosystems—they support more than 130 other species such as burrowing owls and black-footed ferrets.

Habitat loss is one of the most noteworthy threats. Urban development, agriculture and land conversion have dramati-



Photo credit pexels.com.

CONSERVATIONISTS would like to see the prairie dog granted at least threatened status under the Endangered Species Act.

cally reduced habitats. This leaves fragmented areas that make it hard for populations to thrive.

Climate change further compounds things by altering grassland ecosystems: Rising temperatures and prolonged droughts reduce food and water availability, further impacting prairie dogs and the species that depend on them.

"Everything that was in the southern part of their range is kind of lopped off, and you're really seeing almost Colorado become the central core part of their range and then shifting north," says Sterling Krank, Prairie Dog Coalition Director at The Humane Society of the United States.

Another challenge is sylvatic plague, a disease transmitted by fleas that has wiped out large colonies. Also, prairie dogs are viewed as pests by farmers and ranchers. This leads to poisoning and other eradication efforts.

"Prairie dogs, once one of the most abundant animals on the prairie, now occupy two percent of their historic range," reports Christine Peterson in High Country News.

Prairie dogs aren't federally recognized as endangered. But activists are working to conserve them, launching a wide range of initiatives including habitat restoration, vaccination efforts against the plague,

and public awareness programs. These initiatives have brought achievements. But difficulties remain.

Anybody can help safeguard prairie dogs and their habitat. Supporting groups such as Defenders of Wildlife and the Prairie Dog Coalition aids in financing habitat restoration and disease prevention initiatives. Promoting sustainable methods that protect grasslands and reduce human-wildlife conflicts is another way to help.

Raising awareness about the ecological importance of prairie dogs and taking part in citizen science initiatives to track their populations are additional methods to help in their conservation.

Prairie dogs may not hold endangered status at the moment, but their decreasing populations and the dangers they encounter highlight the necessity for intervention.

Assisting conservation efforts and adopting sustainable methods is one approach to help guarantee the survival of these species and uphold the balance of North America's grassland ecosystems.

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

M-E Quilt Group to hold annual resale

The Manhattan-Elwood Quilt Group is hosting its 11th annual Rescue ME Crafters' Resale to be held from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 12 at the Manhattan Township Office, 230 Wabash St., Manhattan.

This resale will feature quilting, sewing and needlework supplies. Purchase a bag to fill for a \$10 donation.

There will also be vintage quilts and sewing machines available for purchase. The funds raised from the resale will be used to offset the costs of the group's Quilting for ME - children's project and other charitable projects.

More information about the group and event is available on the Manhattan-Elwood Quilt Group Facebook page.

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Ed Oedzes

Goodwill unveils new employment program for neurodiverse young adults

Goodwill of Central Illinois held a press conference today to officially unveil Beyond Barriers, a new employment program for neurodiverse young

adults. The program includes resume and cover letter building, mock interviews, virtual reality training, job search assistance, and

learning through job shadowing.

A job coach works with each client during the search process and most importantly after a job is found. Goodwill partners with local employers, healthcare providers, and caregivers to achieve success for these individuals.

"Employment is a key component of our mission, and this population can make valuable employees in our workforce," said Goodwill President & CEO

Don Johnson. "We have the support of our community and the hundreds of great employers here in Central Illinois. The program has been in operation for just over a year and we are seeing great success."

Goodwill offers employment services, veterans' support services, a youth mentoring program, and operates a 15-room veterans' home. For more information visit www.goodwillpeo.org.

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KAREN HART FOR MAYOR

Unanimously supported by Map #190 Sergeants and

Unanimously supported by Police Benevolent Labor Committee

The Police Benevolent Labor Committee (PBLC)
Karen Hart for Braidwood Mayor

Braidwood, Illinois – February 26, 2025 – The Police Benevolent Labor Committee (PBLC) the Union representing the Patrol Officers of the Braidwood Police Department, unanimously voted to endorse Karen Hart for Mayor in the up-coming April 1, 2025 Consolidated Election.

The overwhelming support Karen has bestowed on Braidwood's Patrol Officers is no surprise. Karen listened closely to the challenges that fell at the footsteps of Braidwood Police Departments leadership. Difficult economic challenges are always at the forefront of all aspects of government, those challenges are not a stranger to the citizens of Braidwood either. Karen understands these challenges and with great enthusiasm supported the needs of Braidwood Patrol Officers, their families, all while keeping the safety of the community in mind.

Braidwood Patrol Officers have been blessed with an unmeasurable amount of community support. This type of support delivers a sense of cohesion and balance amongst all. The citizens of Braidwood in an unprecedented fashion have supported patrol officers with the highest regards in mind, just as Karen has.

Every shift a patrol officer will find themselves engaging with citizens. These engagements are genuine and are an essential quality for the community's future. Providing a safe environment for Braidwood's citizens is a responsibility patrol officers honorably do. Patrol officer's recognize community policing also means, to bridge the gap between law enforcement and citizens. Karen has participated in numerous engagements to show support for the community and the efforts of Braidwood's Patrol Officers.

The question often rises, how does any community find balance amongst citizens, patrol officers, and administrators. The answer begins with sound leadership making difficult decisions and open communication. A focus driven leader comprehends the vast roles before them and makes decisions that are progressive in nature. Karen with great admiration for the citizens of Braidwood excepted the responsibility to lead. Karen Hart entrusted the leadership of the Braidwood Police Department to provided new essential gear, patrol vehicles, and countless other needs for officers.

Karen's support for the Patrol Officers for Braidwood cannot be summed up in a single letter of endorsement. The moral of the Braidwood Patrol Officers is at an all-time high. It goes without saying a healthy work environment coupled with progressive leadership is a recipe for success. Karen supported Braidwood Police Department leadership when the call came to hire new patrol officers. Braidwood Patrol Officers extend a genuine pause of gratitude and appreciation to Karen for stepping up for the citizens of Braidwood. Karen has established an environment that is welcoming for the men and woman that dress in the uniform and leave their families to provide excellent service to the citizens of Braidwood.

It's with great honor the Police Benevolent Labor Committee (PBLC) the Union representing the Patrol Officers of the Braidwood Police Department recognizes and endorse

Union Strong! By: PBPA Executive Board

MAP #190 SERGEANT UNION ENDORSES
KAREN HART FOR BRAIDWOOD MAYOR

For Immediate Release
February 26, 2025

Braidwood, Illinois – February 26, 2025 – The Metropolitan Alliance of Police ("MAP") Chapter #190, the Union representing the supervisors of the Braidwood Police Department, in an unprecedented shift, unanimously voted to endorse Karen Hart for Mayor in the upcoming April 1, 2025 Consolidated Election.

Braidwood's law enforcement professionals daily don their uniforms, proudly answer their call to service, and willingly place their lives on the line for the welfare of our fellow citizens.

Now, the quiet professionals stand in unity behind the leadership and professionalism of Karen Hart. Furthermore, they stand to defend against a change in leadership that would be a detriment to morale and be a step backward for a department which has made long strides in progressing forward. MAP Chapter #190 believes in strong leadership, independence, civility, and transparency in candidates.

Karen Hart has steadfastly and boldly demonstrated these attributes. Furthermore, with a vigilant eye for Braidwood's future, Karen Hart has embraced progressive policing strategies, community engagement, and has consistently been a listening and responsive ear for the law enforcement professionals working to preserve Braidwood's progress forward. Karen Hart's proven devotion to service and fair-mindedness are cornerstones for a more prosperous community for everyone.

In a time when communities across Illinois strain to recruit and retain highly skilled and dedicated law enforcement professionals, Karen Hart has addressed this crucial necessity. Karen's philosophy that places service above self, and the value she places on listening to the men and women in the field daily reflect the best of the City of Braidwood and its citizens. We are proud to back the candidate that, likewise, has the backs of her law enforcement professionals.

In difficult times, proven governance is vital. With a proven record of self service, lack of responsibility, and deflected accountability, the election of another candidate would imperil the progress and quality of the service that the citizens of Braidwood have come to rely upon and deserves from its law enforcement professionals.

The Metropolitan Alliance of Police, Chapter #190, is the exclusive bargaining representative and represents the supervising professionals of the Braidwood Police Department. On April 1, 2025, we ask the citizens of Braidwood to take politics out of policing and continue Braidwood's progress forward by electing Karen Hart as your Mayor.

UNION STRONG! By: MAP Chapter #190 Executive Board

UNION STRONG

Paid for by Citizens for a Better Braidwood

Florence Township accepting bids for hauling stone

PUBLIC NOTICE

Bid Requested For 2025 year
Florence Township is accepting bids for hauling stone. Stone is to be spread on said township roads per Road Commissioner's needs. Road work rates can be emailed to FLotwp@air-wans.com. Email any questions to the same Email. Bids to be accepted until April 8, 2025.

Andy Robbins
Florence Township
Road Commissioner
815-351-6927
John Seibert
Florence Road District Clerk
30309 S. Riley Rd.
Wilmington IL 60481
Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

Florence Township seeking bids for tar & chipping

PUBLIC NOTICE

Bid Requested For 2025 year
Florence Township is accepting bids for tar and chipping of approximately 3 miles of roadway. Roads to be done per Road Commissioner's direction and needs. Road work rates can be emailed to FLotwp@air-wans.com. Email any questions to the same Email. Bids to be accepted until April 8, 2025.

Andy Robbins
Florence Township
Road Commissioner
815-351-6927
John Seibert
Florence Road District Clerk
30309 S. Riley Rd.
Wilmington, IL 60481
Published in The Free Press Advocate Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

Florence Township accepting bids for stone

PUBLIC NOTICE

Bid Requested For 2025 year
Florence Township is accepting bids for Stone to be used on the Township roads per Road Commissioner's needs. Stone prices can be emailed to FLotwp@air-wans.com. Email any questions to the same Email. Bids to be accepted until April 8, 2025.

Andy Robbins
Florence Township
Road Commissioner
815-351-6927
John Seibert
Florence Road District Clerk
30309 S. Riley Rd.
Wilmington IL 60481
Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

Florence Township accepting bids for culvert pricing

PUBLIC NOTICE

Bid Requested For 2025 year
Florence Township is accepting bids for culvert pricing for per foot for 22" & 15" 16ga. Galvanized riveted piping to be used on the Township roads per Road Commissioner's needs. Culvert and band prices can be emailed to FLotwp@air-wans.com. Email any questions to the same Email. Bids to be accepted until April 8, 2025.

Andy Robbins
Florence Township
Road Commissioner
815-351-6927
John Seibert
Florence Road District Clerk
30309 S. Riley Rd.
Wilmington IL 60481
Published in the Free Press Advocate, Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

Florence Township to hold annual Town Meeting

PUBLIC NOTICE

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to the legal voters, residents of the Town of Florence in the County of Will and the State of Illinois, that the Annual Town Meeting of said Town will take place on Tuesday, April 8th, 2025, being the second Tuesday of said month at the hour of 6:30 o'clock p.m. at the Florence Township Hall, for the transaction of the miscellaneous business of the said town; and after a Moderator having been elected, will

- 1) Proceed to hear and consider reports of Officers.
- 2) Discuss transfer of excess funds between funds.
- 3) And also decide on such measures as may, in pursuance of law, come before the meeting.

Dated March 11, 2025.

John Seibert
Florence Township Clerk
Published in The Free Press Advocate Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

Area fire departments awarded grants

The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) announced that four area fire districts will receive money as recipients of the 2024 Small Equipment Grant Program.

A total of \$4 million was awarded to 178 fire departments/districts and EMS providers across the state. Included were Coal City Fire Protection District with \$18,750, Gardner Fire Protection District with \$12,142.42, Elwood Fire Protection District \$19,395 and Braidwood Fire Protection District \$25,495.44.

The program was established to provide grants of up to \$26,000 each for the purchase of small firefighting and ambulance equipment.

The purpose is to allow eligible appli-

cants the opportunity to purchase small equipment that they may otherwise not be able to purchase. The OSFM received 347 applications, requesting around \$7.7 million in funding for this grant period.

"Grant programs like our Small Equipment Grant Program are critical in providing fire departments and ambulance providers with the necessary equipment to ensure their staff can perform their duties safely and efficiently. These grants alleviate the burden of tough financial decisions, allowing departments to acquire essential tools without delay, ensuring they have what they need when they need it," said Illinois State Fire Marshal James A. Rivera.



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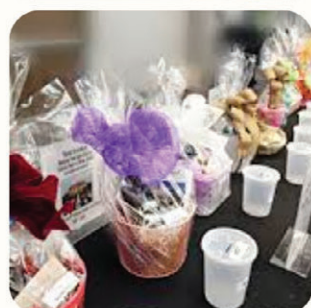
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 - \$300 cash prize- from Oak Knoll Financial Strategies**
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- GIFT BASKETS/CARDS-from local businesses/organizations**
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For info on how to be listed contact
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The Free Press Newspapers

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(815) 634-0315

Published
April 2

Chamber accepting applications for Hometown Heroes banners

info@wilmingtonilchamber.org. For an application visit wilmingtonilchamber.org.

[illegible]

COMET SPORTS



REED-CUSTER HIGH SCHOOL held the winter award event to recognize standout wrestlers during the 2024-25 season. Recipients include (from left) Comet Award-Jeremy Eggleston, Most Improved-Kaaden Wood, Most Valuable-Dominic Alaimo, Coach's Award-Colton Drinkwine, Coach's Award-Jayden Sanchez and Coach's Award-Cole Harris. Alaimo also received wrestling All State honors at 215 pounds. The two-time state qualifier placed sixth during the state individual tournament.

Top Comets from Winter Sports



Courtesy photos
RCHS BASKETBALL SPECIAL awards for the 2025 winter season were given to (from left) Most Improved Player-Kaiden Klein, Comet Hustle Award-Collin Jankus, Most Improved Player-Matt Kuban, MVP-Jacob Reardon, Defense MVP-Dominic Eddy and Mr. Comet Award-Collin Monroe. Reardon also was named All State - 3rd team.



Courtesy photo
RCHS HELD a winter season awards event for girls basketball. Recipients include (from left) MVP Defense-Gwen Stewart, MVP Offense-Alyssa Wollenzien, Comet Award-Leah Grace and Most Improved-Morgan Toler.



Courtesy photo
RCHS CHEER had awards night for the winter season last week. Special awards went to (from left) Most Accomplished-Lily Castleberry, "Kaelynn Fay" Spirit Award-Caysie Esparza, Coach's award-Olivia Esparza and Most Valuable-Madelyn Brown.



Photo by Miley Morris
SLINGING THE SHOT PUT is Reed-Custer's Arlethe Leyva during Tuesday's opener against Streator, Dwight and Wilmington.



Photo by Miley Morris
RCHS CARSON LOWE comes around the track during Tuesday's meet against Streator, Dwight and Wilmington.



Photo by Miley Morris
COMET TANNER GULLQUIST attempts the pole vault during the season opener indoor track meet on Tuesday. The Comets will face Wilmington and Coal City on Saturday at the Comet Invite.



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Photo by Miley Morris
RCHS ALYSSA WOLLENZIEN flies over a hurdle during the first track meet on Tuesday. The Comets hosted Streator, Dwight and Wilmington.