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VOTE

Commissioner of
Finances

KAREN HART

Commissioner of
Public Safety

JAMES “MOOSE” MIKEL

Mayor

DOUG MONEY

Commissioner of
Public Property

WARREN WIETTING

Commissioner of Streets
and Public Improvements

DALE WALSH

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City Council candidates make their final pleas for your vote

STAFF REPORT

Election day is less than one week away.

The race for City Council in Braidwood has been feisty in 2023, with all but one of the four seats on City Council hotly contested, in a race that has been fraught with social media bickering and deep public interest.

As of the start of this week, 132 voters had already cast their ballots during early voting at City Hall. Four years ago,

the total voters in Braidwood reached more than 1,300, a high turnout versus the county's overall turnout of just 13% in 2019.

This year looks to be no different.

Candidates for the mayor and commissioner seats were asked just three questions each by the *Braidwood Journal*, focusing on the role they are seeking and their plans for Braidwood's future.

Candidate responses have not been edited with excep-

tions for obvious typos/mis-spellings.

Candidates are listed in the order that they appear on the ballot.

Election Day is April 4.

**Mayor
Christopher Earley**
In your own words, define the position that you are seeking. What is the role of the position on the council?

The Mayor is the President of the Council, presides at its meetings, and supervises all

department. The Mayor also reports to the council for its action on all matters requiring attention in any department. By law, the Mayor is also the Commissioner of Public Affairs. As such, the Mayor is a lobbyist for the city, interacting with other elected/appointed officials at all levels. This is especially important in areas such as grant writing and dealing with public policy as it may affect Braidwood.

What is your number one top strategic goal for the city of Braidwood over the next four years?

One of the most important things a city can do for its residents is to provide responsible growth by attracting more businesses though economic development. Sometimes incentives are necessary to do so, but spending millions of taxpayer dollars to buy and improve property and then literally giving it away is irresponsible. I favor infrastructure improvements which would not only be conducive to that growth but would benefit all taxpayers. In the last 4 years, Braidwood has not completed a single road project that would accomplish that goal. I plan to change that.

What is your plan for long term commercial and residential growth in Braidwood, and how will you remain transparent while implementing those plans and efforts while in office?

With a fair and equitable distribution of city funds to the

various departments, we can insure that vital infrastructure, such as roads and sidewalks, are properly developed and maintained while also targeting specific projects so as to make our community more attractive to both residential and family friendly commercial development. I believe an Economic Development director would also be beneficial to our city. In our age of constantly expanding technology, total transparency should be easy to achieve. Not only should hard copies of all documents, proposed ordinances, etc. be available at each council meeting, they should also be posted online along with all ordinances, minutes, department status reports and even the city checkbook ledger rather than continuing with the present practice of actually removing information from the city's website. I want the public to be totally informed regarding all aspects of city business.

Douglas Money

In your own words, define the position that you are seeking. What is the role of the position on the council?

I am running for Mayor. By ordinance, my position is titled "Commissioner of Public Affairs." It would be my duty to preside over City meetings and appoint administrative positions such as the City Clerk and City Administrator who handle the day to day operations within City Hall, and the Chief of Police to oversee the Police

Department.

What is your number one top strategic goal for the city of Braidwood over the next four years?

My top priority over the next four years is to expand commerce within the city while maintaining the City's budget, thereby minimizing the risk to the resident's property taxes.

What is your plan for long term commercial and residential growth in Braidwood, and how will you remain transparent while implementing those plans and efforts while in office?

As previously mentioned, it's been a goal for sometime to bring more business to this City. I believe our residential growth will mirror the expansion of businesses as more wholesome jobs become available at these businesses. I will be committed to transparency by ensuring business deals and development agreements are always available for inspection with ease via the city webpage, as well as making myself available to the citizens who wish to have more direct dialogue regarding City projects.

Matthew Beard

In your own words, define the position that you are seeking. What is the role of the position on the council?

I am seeking the position of mayor. The mayor is the legal entity for the city. They

SEE COUNCIL, PAGE 2



EARLY VOTING is available at Braidwood City Hall. The last day for early voting is Friday, March 31. Early voting hours are 9:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

Reed-Custer School Board candidates lay out their plans for the future

STAFF REPORT

There are four candidates vying for three open seats on the Reed-Custer Board of Education in next week's consolidated election. Each seat is a 4-year term on the board.

The *Braidwood Journal* asked each of those candidates a variety of questions on fiscal responsibility, plans to ensure student success for all students, including those with special needs, and teacher retention.

Answers to those questions are listed below in the order the candidates appear on the ballot.

Election day is April 4.

Greg Boyer

The district recently entered into a 6-year, \$19.6 million tax agreement with Constellation Energy's Braidwood Station. What do you see as the district's priori-

ties for utilizing these funds (ie, education, capital improvements, teacher retention projects, etc)?

These funds will be used to provide needed services for all students. The new collective bargaining agreement salary increases will also be supported. The District is looking at increased staffing to support the recently discussed strategic priority regarding student support services. Any budget surplus will be used to make early payments on the debt service agreement for the new Reed-Custer Elementary School and other facility needs.

How will you support the administration in efforts to recruit and retain staff amid a national teacher shortage? What programs will you support or propose that directly address staff retention?

I will support the salary increases through the new contract with staff, I support

signing bonuses to recruit the best possible staff, I will continue to support our newly implemented daycare program for children of district employees, and I will continue to allow our administrators sufficient time to network with local colleges and universities to recruit new staff.

Roughly 14% of Reed-Custer students have an IEP for disabilities including developmental delays, speech or hearing impairments, learning disabilities, and autism. What programs/supports will you support or propose to make sure these students are given all supports available for learning success?

I will support continuing our membership of SOWIC. SOWIC offers professional development through the SOWIC academy. Local teachers are encouraged to visit SOWIC out of district programs to become familiar with

services. We will continue to look for ways to improve our Social/Emotional services potentially adding a social worker. I will support maintaining classroom assistants and will carefully monitor staffing needs.

Roughly 32% of Reed-Custer students are low income. What programs/supports will you support or propose to make sure these students are given all supports available for learning success?

To support our low income students and families we offer robust summer school opportunities, free school supplies, we waive student fees, including K-8 registration fees, we also offer breakfast for students. Every student gets a device to utilize technology (chromebook, I-pad, etc.) and for our families in need we offer mobile hotspots for home internet access. We provide food and clothing, we short-

ened our transportation radius to 1 mile rather than the State law of 1.5 miles. I support our Reed-Custer Cares program, the Holiday Cares program, and I support the Give Something Back Scholarship Participation program.

Melissa Micklos

The district recently entered into a 6-year, \$19.6 million tax agreement with Constellation Energy's Braidwood Station. What do you see as the district's priorities for utilizing these funds (ie, education, capital improvements, teacher retention projects, etc)?

Priorities I would like to see are to attract and retain quality teachers and staff with competitive wages to both combat and address the teacher shortage. Hire a school resource officer that is dedicated solely to the middle school, thus enabling the

District to have an officer present in all three buildings. Ensure we have education curriculum and programs that meet the needs of all students (college, career, trades, and military bound). Promote mental health awareness and combat bullying/cyberbullying in all the schools. I would like to partner with the Braidwood Health and Community Coalition to let students know all the available options they have. I would work with the Superintendent and Administration Team to identify any capital projects and explore funding opportunities.

How will you support the

SEE BOARD, PAGE 3



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Council

also are the one responsible for supervising all departments and are also responsible for running the city council meetings.

What is your number one top strategic goal for the city of Braidwood over the next four years?

My number one goal for the next four years is to design a budget system that allows the city to grow financially while being able to set aside money to complete capital projects, maintain roads and maintain the city's operations plants.

What is your plan for long term commercial and residential growth in Braidwood, and how will you remain transparent while implementing those plans and efforts while in office?

The plan for long term commercial and residential growth would be to invite family friendly businesses to the community. If we could grow the commercial sector with businesses that are family friendly, we could gain a source of income while remaining appealing to families. Family friendly community, low property taxes and the excellent school system is a recipe for residential growth. Transparency would be maintained by keeping the public informed along the way. Holding town hall meetings if necessary and posting as much information online for viewing as possible.

Commissioner of Accounts and Finances
Karen Hart
In your own words, define the position that you are seeking. What is the role of the position on the council?

The position of Commissioner of Accounts and Finance includes the oversight/supervision of the financial operations of the City. In this position, I will look forward to working close-

Custer Township to hold annual town meeting

PUBLIC NOTICE

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

To the legal voters, residents of the Town of Custer in the County of Will and State of Illinois, that the Annual Town Meeting of said town will take place on Tuesday, April 18, 2023 at the hour of 6:30 p.m. at Custer Township Hall, Grant Street, Custer Park 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) Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance
 - (2) Elect a Moderator
 - (3) Announcement of Next Annual Town Meeting
 - (4) Approve Minutes from Annual Town Meeting April 12, 2022
 - (5) Financial Statements of the Township and Road District Funds
 - (6) Recommendations, Resolutions and Discussion from the Electors
 - (9) Adjournment
- Dated March 21, 2023

Christine D. Olson
Town Clerk
Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, March 29, 2023.

Notice of Sheriff's Sale of 265 E. 1st Street

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

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

M&T Bank
Plaintiff,
vs.
William S. Allen; et. al.
Defendant.
No. 22 FC 1024

NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

Public notice is hereby given that pursuant to a judgment entered in the above cause on the 15th day of February, 2023, MIKE KELLEY, Sheriff of Will County, Illinois, will on Thursday, the 6th day of April, 2023, commencing at 12:00 o'clock noon, at the Will County Courthouse Annex, 57 N. Ottawa Street, Room 201, Joliet, IL 60432, sell at public auction to the highest and best bidder or bidders the following-described real estate: **THAT PART OF THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED TRACT LYING WEST OF THE WEST LINE OF THE LAND CONVEYED BY DOCUMENT NO R87-8414 AND LYING EAST OF THE EAST LINE OF THE LAND CONVEYED BY DOCUMENT NOS. R77-32088 AND R84-8808; SAID TRACT DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: THAT PART OF LOTS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 AND 7 IN THE CHICAGO, WILMINGTON AND VERMILLION COAL COMPANY'S RESUBDIVISION OF LOTS 6 AND 7, IN BLOCK 15, IN THE CHICAGO AND WILMINGTON COAL COMPANY'S SUBDIVISION OF THE SOUTH HALF OF SECTION 8, TOWNSHIP 32 NORTH, RANGE 9 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT OF SAID RESUBDIVISION RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 4 (PART 1), PAGE 24 DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS, TO WIT: COMMENCING AT A POINT ON THE NORTH LINE OF SAID LOT 1, 56 FEET WEST OF THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF SAID LOT 1; THENCE SOUTH PARALLEL TO THE EAST LINE OF SAID LOT 1 TO THE NORTHERLY LINE OF KERN STREET; THENCE SOUTHEASTERLY ALONG SAID NORTHERLY LINE OF KERN STREET TO A POINT ON SAID NORTHERLY LINE OF KERN STREET, THAT IS 36 FEET SOUTHEASTERLY OF SAID SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SAID LOT 1, THENCE NORTHEASTERLY TO A POINT ON THE EAST LINE OF SAID LOT 6, 282 FEET SOUTH OF THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF SAID LOT 6; CONTINUING THENCE NORTHEASTERLY ON THE SAME LINE, 26.4 FEET TO A POINT THAT IS 279.8 FEET TO A POINT ON THE NORTH LINE OF SAID LOT 7, 23.4 FEET EAST OF THE NORTHWEST CORNER THEREOF; THENCE WEST 502.2 FEET ON THE SOUTH LINE OF FIRST STREET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING, EXCEPTING THEREFROM COAL AND OTHER MINERALS BENEATH THE SURFACE THEREOF AN ALSO EXCEPTING ALL MINING RIGHTS PERTAINING THERETO, IN WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS.**

Commonly known as: 265 E 1st Street, Braidwood, IL 60408
Description of Improvements: Residential
P.I.N.: 02-24-08-405-034-0000
Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County.

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

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

FOR INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:
Codilis & Associates, P.C.
15W030 N. Frontage Road Suite 100
Burr Ridge, Illinois 60527
P: 630-794-5300
F: 630-794-9090
Plaintiff's Attorney
Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, March 15, 22 and 29, 2023.

ly with the other Commissioners and the City Administrator. I will assist in developing a budget for the City and will keep the Commissioners abreast of how they are managing to their own individual budgets.

What is your number one top strategic goal for the city of Braidwood over the next four years?

My first goal is to ensure that we have a balanced budget and will work collaboratively with the other Council members. I will work to make sure that all bills are paid in a timely manner and that any purchases that are made are ones that have been designated for in the budget. I will also work with other Council members and the Administrator to increase revenue to the City by bringing in new business and from the construction/addition of new homes. I will also search for other revenue sources, such as grants.

What is your plan for long term commercial and residential growth in Braidwood, and how will you remain transparent while implementing those plans and efforts while in office?

In order to attract new business and new residents to Braidwood, we have to show that it is an attractive and safe place to do business in and to live in. Demonstrating that we are a fiscally responsible City will assist in making the city attractive to both business and new residences. I would develop a web site that we could utilize to share City business with residences. I would also bring to Braidwood things like bike trails, dog parks and parks that make the City an attractive place to live. Finally, I believe that the City of Braidwood is now heading in a positive direction and I believe that I can contribute to that positive growth by bringing a new perspective.

Sue Grygiel
In your own words, define the position that you are seeking. What is the role of the position on the council?

Commissioner of

Paruyr Khachatryan 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 PARUYR KENNY KHACHATRYAN to the new name of KENNETH K CROSS, Case No. 2023 MR000062

NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that the undersigned on behalf of himself, Paruyr Kenny Khachatryan 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 May, 2023 before the judge assigned to hear said matter, and then there present a petition requesting the name of Paruyr Kenny Khachatryan be changed to Kenneth K Cross.

/s/ Paruyr Kenny Khachatryan

Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, March 22, 29 and April 5, 2023.

Accounts & Finance oversees the work of the City Accountant. This commissioner serves as the Vice President of the city council in case of a vacancy or absence of the Mayor, then assumes the duties of the Mayor along with their Financial duties. Works closely with the Accountant in preparing Annual Budgets, Tax Levies, Annual Financial Statements of the city, reviews Monthly Expenditure Reports for all departments. The Annual Budget is a Guideline of Expenditures for all commissioners & department heads. Close to the Fiscal Year ending, review all departments budgets and if any department looks like they would be over budget at Year End, have a Council Work Meeting to discuss departments shortfalls and make budget amendments. Then have the Accountant prepare an Amended Budget for council approval. This way all departments budgets are in the black, eliminating Year End Deficits.

What is your number one top strategic goal for the city of Braidwood over the next four years?

Working very closely with the Mayor & Commissioners with upgrading the city's infrastructure, new water lines-possibly larger in some areas, which we are in dire need of if we continue to bring in more businesses. Our city needs New Businesses, but we'll lose out on them coming if we cannot support the infrastructure they need, which this administration hasn't done in four years. We as a council need to work on repair or replacing our roads in town. This current council would not allow any resurfacing of roads for the last four years. The current administration has been saying our roads are in good shape. Some of them could very well be but in order to keep them in good shape they need to be maintained, like putting shoulder stone down to keep sides from eroding away, digging out larger potholes and patching, all of which no funds have been allocated to do this work. Updated infrastructure is vital to bringing in New Businesses and more homes to our town. I want to get back to an Open

Reed Township to hold annual budget hearing

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
REED TOWNSHIP BUDGET

Notice is hereby given that a Tentative Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for Reed Township, Will County, Illinois for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2023 and ending March 31, 2024 will be on file and available to public inspection starting March 25, 2023 at the Reed Township Office/Hall, 440 N. Division Street, Braidwood, Illinois 60408.

Notice is further given that a public hearing on said Budget and Appropriation will be at 4:15 on April 27, 2023 at 440 N. Division Street, Braidwood, Illinois and that the final action on this ordinance and appropriation will be taken at the public hearing. Dated this 24th day of March, 2023.

Thomas Nahas, Reed Township Clerk
Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, March 29, 2023.

Kristina Khachatryan 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 KRISTINA MARIE KHACHATRYAN to the new name of KRISTINA MARIE CROSS, Case No. 2023 MR000063

NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that the undersigned on behalf of herself, Kristina Marie Khachatryan 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 May, 2023 before the judge assigned to hear said matter, and then there present a petition requesting the name of Kristina Marie Khachatryan be changed to Kristina Marie Cross.

/s/ Kristina Marie Khachatryan
Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, March 22, 29 and April 5, 2023.

Petition for name change of Khachatryan Minors

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(s) of KENNETH JAMES KHACHATRYAN to the new name of KENNETH JAMES CROSS and KARTER COLE KHACHATRYAN to the new name of KARTER COLE CROSS, Case No. 2023 MR000068

NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that the request of: Paruyr Kenny Khachatryan to change the names of minors. Kenneth James Khachatryan and Karter Cole Khachatryan, who shall appear in the Will County Court, Room 905, 100 W. Jefferson, Joliet, Illinois 60432 at 9:03 a.m. on the 15th day of May, 2023 before the judge assigned to hear said matter, and then there present a petition requesting the names of Kenneth James Khachatryan be changed to Kenneth James Cross and Karter Cole Khachatryan be changed to Karter Cole Cross.

/s/ Paruyr Kenny Khachatryan
Petitioner
Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, March 22, 29, and April 5, 2023.

Government!

What is your plan for long term commercial and residential growth in Braidwood, and how will you remain transparent while implementing those plans and efforts while in office?

Our Business District on Main St. needs a definite facelift. During my term I had a proposed strip mall going in where Mayor Rulien built the Family Dollar store. I had Local businesses going in the strip mall along with a new Bar & Grill Restaurant with outdoor seating. I initiated the process of enlarging the footprint of Casey's, and the property behind Casey's that the city purchased during my term with TIF dollars, which the current administration surplused, why and for how much? Berkots was planning to relocate behind Casey's and the vacant Berkots would be a Braidwood Community Center. My hope is that we, the new incoming city council can accomplish some of the ideas that were in place before I left office. Another commercial area needing a major facelift is the old Good Table Restaurant on Coal City Road that's been sitting vacant for too many years. This building is an eyesore when coming off the highway, a perfect location for a TIF Redevelopment Agreement for an established Restaurant chain. All projects, ideas for growth will be openly discussed at council meetings & input from residents will be addressed under Public Comment without ridicule and copies will be made available to residents at the Council Meeting or online to view.

Commissioner of Public Property

Jeffrey Saltzman
In your own words, define the position that you are seeking. What is the role of the position on the council?

The Commissioner of Public Property is responsible for the management of the physical buildings, structures, and parcels of land. They also oversee water and waste treatment plant employees. My role on the council will be to advocate and promote proactive maintenance of all city properties. I will accomplish that by respectfully listening to the city employees charged with operating our water and waste treatment assets and acting on it.

What is your number one top strategic goal for the city of Braidwood over the next four years?

My top strategic goal is to try to relieve some of the tax burden on our citizens by doing a deep dive into federal and state municipal grants. I have already reached out to our 3 state representatives and senator and will ask for assistance and direction in applying for all state grants and money for which we may qualify. I've investigated the federal grant database and we are eligible for municipal grants if we apply accordingly.

Reed Township Road District to hold annual budget hearing

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
REED ROAD DISTRICT BUDGET

Notice is hereby given that a Tentative Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for REED TOWNSHIP ROAD DISTRICT, Will County, Illinois for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2023 and ending March 31, 2024 will be on file and available to public inspection starting March 25, 2023 at the Reed Township Office/Hall, 440 N. Division Street, Braidwood, Illinois 60408.

Notice is further given that a public hearing on said Budget and Appropriation will be at 4:15 on April 27, 2023 at 440 N. Division Street, Braidwood, Illinois and that the final action on this ordinance and appropriation will be taken at the public hearing. Dated this 24th day of March, 2023.

Thomas Nahas, Reed Township Clerk
Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, March 29, 2023.



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What is your plan for long term commercial and residential growth in Braidwood, and how will you remain transparent while implementing those plans and efforts while in office?

My plan for long term commercial and residential growth is to support all infrastructure projects. To attract new businesses and residents, we must properly maintain our facilities, water and sewer lines, public properties, and roads. I am championing a new city web presence. All bids, documents, agendas, meeting notes and city check book will be available on-line, complete transparency. I will ask that we create open committees to include any resident interested in having input on large projects and purchases when feasible.

Warren Wietting
In your own words, define the position that you are seeking. What is the role of the position on the council?

The position of Commissioner of Public Properties role is to supervise the conduct of the water and sanitary sewer department, all real estate, including the City Hall, and personal property which is not used by a specific department.

What is your number one top strategic goal for the city of Braidwood over the next four years?

To complete the comprehensive plan for the ongoing upgrades with the sewer plant and wells. The SCADA System Implementation and the wells upcoming maintenance. As well as the priority infrastructure repairs and upgrades needed.

What is your plan for long term commercial and residential growth in Braidwood, and how will you remain transparent while implementing those plans and efforts while in office?

To maintain and develop the infrastructure of the city of Braidwood, Transparency comes with honesty, whatever is done should be made available to the public with easy access to that information.

Commissioner of Public Health and Safety

James Mikel
In your own words, define the position that you are seeking. What is the role of the position on the council?

Supervise the conduct and operations of the Police Department, Emergency dispatching and telecommunication-

tions, code enforcement, Animal Control, and Health Regulations.

What is your number one top strategic goal for the city of Braidwood over the next four years?

Continue to maintain a safe community, work hand and hand with the Chief Lyons, our police department is doing a fantastic job. They are well liked in our community. All I hear are positive things.

What is your plan for long term commercial and residential growth in Braidwood, and how will you remain transparent while implementing those plans and efforts while in office?

To work with the Mayor and City Council to continue to improve our town, continue to do what we are doing, keep it a small town feeling and bring in some new business, we have to keep moving forward.

Commissioner of Streets and Public Improvements

James Vehrs
At press time, candidate Vehrs had not responded to the candidate questionnaire from the Braidwood Journal.

Dale Walsh
In your own words, define the position that you are seeking. What is the role of the position on the council?

The Commissioner of Streets & Public Improvements is the Superintendent of the street department including alleys, sidewalks, drainage and storm sewer system. I would also be co-commissioner of the public works department.

What is your number one top strategic goal for the city of Braidwood over the next four years?

I will work with the street department to continue making Braidwood a welcoming city for its residents, business and travelers.

What is your plan for long term commercial and residential growth in Braidwood, and how will you remain transparent while implementing those plans and efforts while in office?

Commercial & residential growth is currently underway in Braidwood. I plan to be part of this positive trend with the goal of keeping city taxes at a minimum. Along with live streaming of the City Council meetings, I plan to update residents on the Street Department progress at Council Meetings and online.

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher
Marney Simon, editor

The mystery of contagious disease in early Braidwood

We are no stranger to contagious disease. COVID has proved that those tiny bugs are always out there, plotting how best to infect us. The diseases have changed, but the story is the same - sickness, sadness and death.

We find a cure for one and another pops up. What was the response back in the day? It varied. Let's take a look at contagious disease.

Water born diseases were the most plentiful type in the 19th century, that includes cholera and typhoid. And when you think of it, Braidwood is an ideal candidate to spread disease from outhouses to wells because of the high water table and the close quarters most of the miners and their families lived in.

It is almost surprising that the first mention of these diseases wasn't until September 10, 1875 in the Wilmington Advocate, "Cholera infantum, is the prevailing disease in Braidwood, and the doctors are having all they can do." But they truly did not know what to do.

Finally, some light dawned on citizens because on August 13, 1875



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

we read, "Cholera infantum, as usual in summer, is beginning to make angels of the Braidwood babies. Braidwood water should be boiled and cooled, before the young children are allowed to drink it."

Of course, the water should have been boiled for adults as well but my theory goes, adults did not drink water but tea or coffee which is boiled, or beer and whiskey which is sterilized.

That same year another horrible disease popped up. "Died - in Braidwood, on the 11th inst. Of diphtheria, Edward, son of Patrick and Catherin Burke, aged 18 months."

And "An epidemic of croupous diphtheria is visiting Braidwood, many cases terminating fatally." And "Died - In Braidwood, on the 3rd inst., of croupous diphtheria, Allie, daughter of William Porter and Adelaide Barker, aged about 3 years."

In September of 1882 we read of a double-whammy, "Mr. Mooney's two sons have been suffering for two weeks from a combined attack of scarlet fever and diphtheria. We are glad to learn that their condition is somewhat improved."

Also," Mr. and Mrs. Corey are certainly entitled to the sympathy so literally felt for them in these hours of their affliction.

Little Harry, aged about ten and a half years, died on Thursday evening, from that dread scourge, diphtheria, and two other of their children are seriously ill. Little Harry was an especially bright child and was a general favorite among all of his associates, But -

There is the flock, however tended

But one dead lamb is there:
There is no home, however defended

But has a vacant chair
Eight more children died of diphtheria by the end of the year.

Then as if the one disease wasn't enough, on December 22, 1882 we read of another water born disease in Braidwood, "Tis sad in deed to record the death of little Harry Sitterley. It occurred on Tuesday last from typhoid fever. The deceased was aged nearly 12 years and was an unusually intelligent boy."

And in the same issue, "Miss Nellie A. Freeman died in this city on the 13th inst. of typhoid fever, at the age of eighteen years and four months. The deceased was an accomplished young lady who made

friends of all her acquaintances, and very much sympathy is expressed on account of her untimely death."

In both cases, this disease seems to be taken in stride, with no mention of quarantine. And in 1886 it was nonchalantly reported, "Some Typhoid fever about town is reported." A week later, "Mrs. Joe Donnelly is afflicted with an attack of typhoid fever. Two of John Beland's children are similarly affected."

The age of indoor toilets and city water helped curb both these diseases in Braidwood. There was only one more mention of typhoid and that was in 1910. But that year Joliet was not so lucky. We read on October 14, 1910, "An epidemic of typhoid fever is raging in Joliet. Over 500 people are in the grip of the deadly microbe."

The disease has been traced to well water and also to flies which bring in the microbes on their feet from out houses. Both hospitals are overcrowded with typhoid patients and some of the physicians have from 20 to 40 patients."

Strangely, another disease did start Braidwood talking contagion. We read on October 17, 1879, "The small pox case is kept well in hand and few fears exist as to its spread. The patient is a little girl of eleven,

who recently arrived from England. Her older sister removed from the family residence some days ago, is also ill, but it is by no means certain that her affliction is small pox, although some indications point that way. Now is the time to nip the contagion before it has a firm foothold."

Whether this disease was taken more seriously because of the lesions, or because small pox was a disease that had decimated many European countries. It evidently did cause a disturbance because the following week's paper printed this, "The small pox scare has thoroughly subsided. It is true that a child in the family recently afflicted has varioloid, but not to any serious extent, so says Dr. Backus."

But it seems that Dr. Backus was wrong, as a month later we read, "That the small pox exists in this city is no secret, but the contagion is kept well in hand and no serious apprehensions of its spread are entertained."

There are but four or five cases of it and varioloid in town, all told, and these are represented by city physician Rich as being confined to quarantined localities and well guarded against."

The war on disease was and is, never ending.

Board

administration in efforts to recruit and retain staff amid a national teacher shortage? What programs will you support or propose that directly address staff retention?

To start I would support the Superintendent and Administration Team in attracting and retaining teachers with competitive wages. I will continue to support the growth of the daycare program that the District recently started. Having an affordable daycare option for teachers can entice teachers to stay/join in our district. It takes a lot of stress away and shows teachers that the District cares about this important issue.

I would work with the Superintendent and Administrative Team to seek out teacher candidates from colleges. Finding college students about to graduate with education degrees in subject areas we need would be a great resource.

Lastly, I support and encourage the Superintendent and Admin Team to attend networking events, with intent of meeting and attaining qualified teacher candidates.

Roughly 14% of Reed-Custer students have an IEP for disabilities including developmental delays, speech or hearing impairments, learning disabilities, and autism. What programs/supports will you support or propose to make sure these students are given all supports available for learning success?

I understand there is a large concern in recent discussions throughout our community as to why the School District does not solely support students with special needs and in some cases, busses them out of district. As a new candidate, I do not have institutional knowledge of the current financial contract with SOWIC. I believe there is an opportunity to better understand why the contract is in place and weigh that against the costs associated with having a program exclusively for Reed-Custer. Once I learn more about the financials, I can better provide insight to the pros and cons.

While attending the monthly board meetings, I do know that the District is represented by Superintendent

Mark Mitchell, at a monthly meeting with SOWIC. I would make sure that any recommendations that are made during the monthly SOWIC meeting are presented and discussed at the School Board Meetings. Relative to the in-house students, I would support the feedback from the individual schools. If the Administration, Teachers, or Aides feel that there is more that can be done to support any students education, and help assist them with learning, I would want the Superintendent to bring those ideas to the Board, for the collective group to determine how to meet those needs.

Roughly 32% of Reed-Custer students are low income. What programs/supports will you support or propose to make sure these students are given all supports available for learning success?

With the low-income percentage being elevated within our District, I would encourage the guidance counselors to find any and all scholarship and grant opportunities to assist those students that want to pursue college. I would encourage apprenticeships and trades be promoted as available career opportunities and give guidance to those that are interested. Many may not know, but Wilco held a satellite fire program at the Braidwood Fire Protection District. The program was predominantly Wilmington and Braidwood students but was operated on behalf of Wilco. The program was successful, but staffing, logistics and financial support was still needed. I would need to better understand strengths and weaknesses of these types of arrangements to explore whether opportunities such as this are possible in the future. If not, fully explain the reasoning to the parents with statistics and clear information.

I would also support the programs that allow us to cover school supplies, send Chromebooks home with every student for homework completion, and even supply Wi-Fi hot spots for those that need it. I would promote and support discounted and free meals, and ensure we always have breakfast available. Free sack lunches in the summertime, along with the free day camps, and extra meals/care packages of food that can be sent home for those students that may not be getting enough for dinner. There are grant opportunities for fund-

ing various programs that can be looked into, if they are not being looked into already.

Chris Cavanaugh
The district recently entered into a 6-year, \$19.6 million tax agreement with Constellation Energy's Braidwood Station. What do you see as the district's priorities for utilizing these funds (ie, education, capital improvements, teacher retention projects, etc)?

The current board members recently conducted a strategic planning session which included members of the community, staff, administrators, and students to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the district. The primary opportunity identified at this session was to focus on Student Supports. The board is now working together with administration to form and execute proposals to improve the education provided by the district to all student groups, based off of the feedback we were provided during the planning session.

How will you support the administration in efforts to recruit and retain staff amid a national teacher shortage? What programs will you support or propose that directly address staff retention?

If re-elected I will continue to try to find ways to improve recruitment and retention of staff as we have done in recent years. Some examples of this include board sponsored changes in the Collective Bargaining Agreement to assist us in attracting quality applicants and the addition of affordable in-house childcare for staff. We have also recently requested that our administrators start networking with local Colleges and Universities in an attempt to build bridges for future recruitment of new grads.

Roughly 14% of Reed-Custer students have an IEP for disabilities including developmental delays, speech or hearing impairments, learning disabilities, and autism. What programs/supports will you support or propose to make sure these students are given all supports available for learning success?

We continue to be a member of SOWIC which is a provider for some of our special needs students. When we built the new Elementary we as a board made a commitment to keep as much of the SOWIC in house as possible by signing a long term lease for a portion of the new building with them. We have also added the Director of Student Services position which greatly helps with our special needs students. Lastly we recently added an additional class to each grade at the Elementary Building to lower the class sizes for the lower grades.

Roughly 32% of Reed-Custer students are low income. What programs/supports will you support or propose to make sure these students are given all supports available for learning success?

We have added several programs in recent years to assist in this area as well. Some of these include providing free school supplies, instituting a breakfast program, waiving student fees, updated technology to include student devices and mobile hotspots for those in need. We also along with our staff support Reed Custer Cares program and the Give Something Back Scholarship Program.

John Guistat
The district recently entered into a 6-year, \$19.6 million tax agreement with Constellation Energy's Braidwood Station. What do you see as the district's priorities for utilizing these funds (ie, education, capital improvements, teacher retention projects, etc)?

The priority of the school board should be investing in the education of the students. We can have the newest, most beautiful buildings and facilities in the state, but none of that matters if we aren't investing in the kids that are sitting in those new classrooms and making sure we do everything possible to set them up for success in life. I also believe that investing in the education of the students and providing more instructional resources will lead to better staff retention as well, so it's a no-brainer that we should be investing in education.

How will you support the administration in efforts to recruit and retain staff amid a national teacher shortage? What programs will you support or propose that directly address staff retention?

In addition to investing in instructional resources as I stated in the last question, I'd also like to look at providing advancement opportunities for our staff. One thing I'd like to look at is partnering with a college or university so that our staff have the opportunity to earn additional teaching endorsements or even advanced degrees. If we invest in our staff's professional development, I believe the students can only benefit and we'd also be attracting and retaining passionate professionals who want to grow in their career.

Roughly 14% of Reed-Custer students have an IEP for disabilities including developmental delays, speech or hearing impairments, learning disabilities, and autism. What programs/supports will you

support or propose to make sure these students are given all supports available for learning success?



While our statistics say 14% of students have an IEP as of today, that number is going to steadily increase. In March of this year, the CDC announced that the number for children diagnosed with autism, alone, increased to 1 in 36 (a 10% jump in just two years). IEPs and how to best serve our students with special needs is something that needs to be a primary focus as these numbers continue to rise. One thing that's helped my kids tremendously is speech, developmental, occupational, etc. therapies over the years; these basic therapies should be readily available for our students without a doubt. As a parent who's been through IEP meetings, I know that one thing is certain; there's no blanket cover-all approach to what your individual student needs to thrive in school. Individual Education Plans (IEP) need to be specialized for each student with the input of chiefly their parent/guardian and

their educators; our role as a school board should be making sure that whatever supports the IEP team deems necessary for each individual student are readily available so that they have what is needed to succeed.

Roughly 32% of Reed-Custer students are low income. What programs/supports will you support or propose to make sure these students are given all supports available for learning success?

This goes back to investing in the students' success. No student, regardless of their family's financial situation, should be turned away from participating in anything our schools have to offer and I'd strive to work with community groups and stakeholders to make sure that all resources are made available to those families that need them.

Editor's note - Due to space constraints, two of the six questions asked to school board candidates were omitted from this edition. The full responses can be found on the Braidwood Journal website, at www.braidwoodjournal.com



Elect

BOYER

MICKLOS

CAVANAUGH

★★★★★★★★

FOR REED-CUSTER SCHOOL BOARD

Paid for by Boyer, Micklos and Cavanaugh

ELECT

Melissa MICKLOS

Reed-Custer School Board



- 16 year member Braidwood Fire Department
- 4 year member FORCES parent/teacher group
- Parent of RCES student



Priorities:

- Mental Health Awareness for all students
- Anti-Bullying and Cyberbullying
- Teacher Retention
- Clear lines of communication with parents

Paid for by Melissa Micklos

Honesty

Integrity

ELECT

Chris EARLEY

Mayor

Leadership

Focus On:

- Economic Interest
- Professionalism
- Transparency
- Communication

Experience

Paid for by Chris Earley

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His own space

WILMINGTON—Thank you Free Press Advocate for the front page article about Kevin Fox. I so appreciate the focus being on Kevin without mentioning the unjust arrest mess with Will County. He deserves his own space and tribute especially since being found not guilty. I'm currently irritated with the TV stations announcing the accident while a video of Kevin in prison clothes is running in the background. Freedom of the press or not...that's just wrong.

Toss them in jail

WILMINGTON—Why is it always politically motivated or "a witch hunt" when the facts prove a law was broken by a politician? Can I call for a rebellion to take my town back when I get a speeding ticket? I am sick and tired of politicians from both parties who think they are above the law. Fine these babies or toss them in jail for 30 days.

Problems/solutions

BRAIDWOOD—I was going to write a Soundoff about a problem and the solution of problems. I decided not to use the word solution to avoid confusion. The word colloidal (sp?) fit. That Sound Off would have been in the same March 22, 2023 issue as the Coal City, "A new deal" and its use of solutions and again humanity needs solutions. I started to wonder if it was my pondering putting the word "solution" in the air and it was picked up.

The middle class

COAL CITY—The poor have Medicaid and food stamps and the rich have money to get by on. What does the middle class have? You go out and go to work, you come home and don't even have enough money to go on vacation or even go out and get ice cream because you've got to pay your bills, your insurance, mortgage, everything. Food is going up. Please, if you feel like I do, call or write your senators. I don't think they're going to be much help because it seems like the politicians are all in cahoots. They don't want to help the middle class person, they just want to drown us or something. I love this country but what's happening to it is a disgrace.

Signs of Spring

BRAIDWOOD—Well we waited all winter for this. Spring, it's finally here. And you can tell it's spring just from the political signs all over town. I think there should be a limit as to how many each candidate can put out because apparently some of these politicians are thinking the more they put out the easier they will get elected. Let's pass an ordinance that says

each candidate gets up to 20 signs, no more. That way the town wouldn't look so trashy.

Walking on water

WILMINGTON—Where was the city of Wilmington engineer when the list was made for repaving streets? Seems to me like North Water Street should have been on that list. We're a town that plans Easter egg hunts, a Route 66 festival and Catfish Days focusing on the downtown so why not have the street in tip-top shape. We're finally seeing businesses fixing up the fronts of their buildings but the street itself is a hellhole that should have been repaved years ago.

R.I.P Kevin

WILMINGTON—Rest in peace Kevin Fox. My heart aches for his family and friends. Word of his sudden death reminded me of the injustice he suffered at the hands of Sheriff detectives who were blind to the evidence that was in their possession. Sadly, so many in this town were led to believe he was guilty while the real murder went unknown for six years. Kevin leaves behind a wife and three kids. As a community we can show compassion for his loved ones. There is a Go Fund me account set up to help his family. I urge you to give.

Cut wasteful spending

BRAIDWOOD—Here are some ways to solve Illinois' 120 billion state pension deficit. Why does Illinois need township government, regional superintendents and many other do-nothing jobs? Cut all wasteful spending and cut all programs that the state can't afford. Freeze all politicians' wages. Revamp the entire public pension system. Public employees work for the taxpayers and we should determine their compensation. Welfare payments are wasted on far too many. Once all these suggestions are met, take the savings to pay down the pension deficit. Instead, Gov. Pritzker and the Democrats in charge in Springfield just keep passing more tax increase in the form of user fees. License plate, trailer, driver's license, gas taxes and property taxes have all gone up. They raise the minimum wage and what does that mean? More payroll taxes for the state, thus another tax increase. Cut the waste.

Running mate

Something to ponder: When the character of your running mates is so bad, you won't admit that they're your running mates.

Retraining

SHADOW LAKES—Grandmammy is now racist, please report anyone using this word to the local Democratic HQ for retraining.



The trash corridor

COAL CITY—What an embarrassment it is to see all the garbage thrown out along I-55. Just look in the median from Arsenal Road to the Des Plaines River bridge. I have never in my life seen it as bad as it is now. I'm not sure who is responsible for this problem but since it's an Illinois State Highway I think the Governor would be the best place to start. Maybe IDOT? Sounds like the garbage trucks traveling along there are responsible for a lot of the mess but if so then they need to be held accountable for it. We have plenty of inmates in prisons who could be out there cleaning up the mess. Why not put them to good use? If anyone reading this knows who to direct this problem to please do so or leave instructions in this column on how to deal with it. Illinois sure doesn't have the best reputation lately for a great place to live.

The local store

COAL CITY—Well, you have lost a customer as of today. You had a sale going on the Scott's 1-4 Step program. Halfway through your sale you decide to now offer a \$15 gift card on top of the sale price if you purchased the 1-4 Step program. Why wouldn't you have offered that at the beginning of the sale? When I asked

Eddie

what if you already purchased the program, you basically told me that there was nothing you could do so that I could get the additional \$15 gift card. I asked what if I brought receipt in could you refund the original purchase and just ring it back up again. Your answer was there is nothing I can do for you. So over a \$15 gift card, you have lost a customer who probably spends a few thousand dollars there each year. Basically, when you told me there is nothing you could do for me, all I heard was screw you, we already got your money. Amazon and Menards are looking better and better every day.

Parents Bill of Rights

WILMINGTON—I would have more respect for Republicans if they said what they really mean. An example would be this travesty they just passed should be called the White Christian Parents Bill of Rights including the right to violate the rights of other parents who they disagree with.

The orange buffoon

WILMINGTON—I'm getting really tired of Republicans saying President Biden needs to unite the country while the orange buffoon called Trump is promising death and destruction.

Penny Lane

Local gas prices jump then come back down

Gasoline prices jumped as much as 20 cents per gallon at a couple of area stations on Wednesday, but have since trickled down from a high of \$3.79/g.

On Monday stations in Wilmington were charging anywhere from \$3.38/g (Mohsen) to \$3.72/g (Circle K), a difference of 34 cents.

Braidwood area stations were priced at \$3.64/g while in Coal City motorists were paying \$3.69/g, at the pump.

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have risen 6.8 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.67/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Prices in Illinois are 16.3 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 80.5 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

The lowest price in the state was \$3.23/g while the highest was \$4.79/g, a difference of \$1.56/g.

The national average is up 7.8 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 83.0 cents per gallon lower than a year ago, according to GasBuddy data.

"The national average price of gasoline has seen little overall change over the last week, with big decreases in states like Colorado and Ohio offset by large increases in Arizona and North Carolina. While more states saw declines than increases, any downward trends are still likely to be temporary and not necessarily long lasting," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"While Colorado's refinery issues are largely moving into the rearview mirror, challenges making the transition to summer gasoline in Arizona are leading to tight supply and accelerating prices. Motorists in some areas may be on the receiving end of good news, while others may not as we hit the second half of refinery maintenance season. You never know what the closing moments will look like, and motorists could be in for a dramatic ride if issues develop."

Diesel has fallen 5.9 cents in the last week and stands at \$4.19 per gallon.

Ranked choice voting being debated

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois lawmakers are debating whether the state should join a growing list of jurisdictions in the United States that allow voters to pick more than one candidate for an office, ranking them in order of preference rather than choosing just one.

Ranked choice voting, or as it's sometimes called, "instant runoff voting," actually has a long history in U.S. elections at the municipal level. But it has become more widely adopted in modern times, including in several states and dozens of municipalities.

"This is a better voting model to ensure all voices and choices are reflected in the election results," Amber McReynolds, an elections expert and former elections director for the city and county of Denver, CO, told a House committee March 15. "It prioritizes and expands voter choice, it puts voters first, and it improves the voting experience for all."

The proposals facing Illinois lawmakers are subject to change as they move through the legislative process.

In a general ranked choice voting system, voters mark candidates in the order of their preference in races with three or more candidates. The voter can rank as many candidates as they choose. In a five-person race, for example, a voter might rank one candidate first, another second and leave the sections of the other three candidates blank.

In the first round of counting, ballots are counted as they are now, with everyone's vote going to their first choice.

If no one has achieved a majority, the person with the fewest votes is eliminated and their voters' ballots are recounted with their votes going to their highest ranked candidate that is still in the race.

This continues until a candidate earns a majority of votes counted in a given round of tabulation. This may not mean a majority of all people who voted in the election, since a ballot isn't counted after all of their listed choices are eliminated.

According to the group FairVote, which advocates for ranked choice voting,

there are 64 jurisdictions that allow that method of elections, including the states of Maine and Alaska, as well as two counties and 60 cities.

Colorado enacted a law in 2021 that allows municipalities to opt in to ranked choice voting in local elections. And Democratic parties in five states – Alaska, Kansas, Hawaii, Nevada and Wyoming – used it, wholly or partially, in their 2020 presidential primaries.

There are currently three bills pending in the General Assembly that would allow ranked choice voting in one form or another.

House Bill 2716, by Rep. Nabeela Syed, D-Inverness, would implement the system for elections for the General Assembly, governor and other statewide constitutional officers.

House Bill 2807, by Rep. Maurice West, D-Rockford, would establish ranked choice voting in presidential primaries in Illinois. And House Bill 3749, by Rep. Kam Buckner, D-Chicago, would allow municipalities to use ranked choice voting if the municipality's chief election authority submits a written statement saying they have the ability to conduct such an election.

Impact on elections

Supporters of ranked choice voting argue that it has several advantages over "plurality voting," in which the person with the most votes after one round of counting wins regardless of whether that person has a majority.

One, they say, is that it reduces the number of "wasted" votes – that is, votes cast for candidates who drop out of the race after it's too late to remove their name from the ballot. McReynolds said that is particularly true in presidential primaries in which a large field of candidates is winnowed down to just a few after the first few states cast ballots.

"In 2016, more than 2 million voters actually took the effort to vote for a candidate on the Republican side (after they had dropped out of the race). Their vote was lost," she said. "In 2020, around 3 million to 4 million of Democrats – that's the estimated (number) – had that same issue happen because lots of dropouts start happening after Super Tuesday in those periods of time."

Under ranked choice voting, she said,

ily be a bad thing.

"It's their money, and if you are paying too much in taxes throughout the year and don't have appropriate withholdings on your W-4, you might be giving Uncle Sam an interest-free loan," Snider said.

Utah led the nation for the biggest federal returns with an average federal tax refund for 2021 of \$1,812. With 5.4 million tax refunds issued, the state's average may have benefited

from boosted tax credits for children as the average household size was higher for 2021 in Utah than in any other state.

The study also found that Illinois had the second-lowest average state and local tax refund out of all states in 2020 at an average of \$581. Only Pennsylvania had a lower average refund.

The deadline to file taxes this year is April 18.



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Celebrate Spring with a sweet Sangria cocktail

In a pitcher or in a bowl, nothing brings springtime refreshment like a scratch-made batch of authentic Sangria.

There are bottled "Sangria" options in the wine section of your local spirits retailer if you are looking for a shortcut, but you can't beat the real thing when it comes to Sangria.

This week we will roll up our sleeves and prepare a batch of the 100% authentic variety, and the end result will be worth the effort.

Ah, Sangria. The wine punch that everyone loves to



THE SUNDAY COCKTAIL
Brian Rung

Sangria recipe uses a true Spanish red wine and blends of herbs, spices, sugar, fruit, etc. The real trick was getting the Sangria recipe under 10 ingredients and cutting prep time down to minutes as opposed to hours.

Sangria was originally a spring/summer afternoon drink in its native Spain, but the modernized version of Sangria is very much a drink for all seasons thanks to the addition of brandy.

The addition of brandy to the red wine adds an incredible depth to the punch while maintaining the refreshing notes of citrus and apple. Brandy-based Sangria is

drink but nobody likes to prepare. Preparing a batch of authentic Sangria is more akin to cooking than it is to mixology, but the sharing of ideas among the innovative mixology community has yielded some simplified but tasty Sangria recipes over the last fifteen to twenty years.

A "real" Sangria recipe uses a true Spanish red wine and blends of herbs, spices, sugar, fruit, etc. The real trick was getting the Sangria recipe under 10 ingredients and cutting prep time down to minutes as opposed to hours.

Sangria was originally a spring/summer afternoon drink in its native Spain, but the modernized version of Sangria is very much a drink for all seasons thanks to the addition of brandy.

The addition of brandy to the red wine adds an incredible depth to the punch while maintaining the refreshing notes of citrus and apple. Brandy-based Sangria is

regarded by Europeans as "Americanized" Sangria, and the American imbibers also took some liberties with the sugar portions and the use of club soda to add a bit of sparkle to the wine punch.

Sangria recipes vary widely, even in the US where the term "Sangria" now refers to nearly any combination of red wine and fruit served in a pitcher.

Regardless of what Sangria is or is not by your definition, every host or hostess should have a tasty Sangria recipe in their notebook. I love "self-serve" drinks when hosting parties.

Set out some of the smaller punch cups when serving to keep portions small and have a second pitcher in the refrigerator if you are expecting more than 15-20 people.

Sangria is also customizable, perhaps more so than any other concoction from your kitchen or home bar. More sweetness? Add more brown sugar. Don't like brown sugar? Add cane sugar. Not strong enough? Add more brandy. Can't taste the citrus?

Add more orange juice, and you get the idea. The recipe below will serve as the

perfect jumping off point, but it is also a fine "simplified" Sangria even if no further ingredients are added.

I know of families that have incorporated Sangria into their Thanksgiving dinner tradition, an example of how this versatile wine-based cocktail is never out of season.

If you follow the recipe below, you are virtually guaranteed a tasty Sangria. However, the key is to use quality ingredients in your Sangria. Not necessarily expensive, but quality. This means no plastic bottle wine or brandy.

Speaking of wine and brandy, you should reach for the "middle shelf" variety of both. With any luck a decent Spanish red will be on sale, but any dry red wine will work in this recipe. Don't waste a bottle of the good stuff, you should not spend more than \$20-\$25 on a bottle of dry red for Sangria.

Same with the brandy, stick with the middle shelf bottles. Many high-end restaurants use quality cognac in their Sangria recipes, but this is more of a gourmet twist on the recipe that is tailored for pairing with certain dishes.

I wouldn't waste cognac of

any price point on Sangria, Christian Brothers brandy works well as a mixer and is my first choice for Sangria. If Christian Brothers is unavailable, reach for E&J.

Use the orange juice that you have on hand, but be aware that some juices contain added sugar. Remember, you are adding sugar in addition to the orange juice so it is best to use a "100% juice unsweetened" orange juice.

I recommend decreasing the sugar to cut sweetness as opposed to backing off the orange juice. The orange and citrus notes are too important to the overall flavor of the drink, if too little orange juice is used the citrus notes will be overpowered by the wine.

If you're an experimental mixologist and can't resist the urge to add some ingredients to your Sangria, some popular additions are: lemon wheels, club soda, peaches, pineapples, pears, nectarines, blueberries, blackberries, triple sec, and various flavored liqueurs.

Sangria is built in a large pitcher, served chilled.

Ingredients:
1/2 apple, cored, skin on, and chopped
1/2 orange, sliced, rind on,



seeds removed
4 tablespoons brown sugar
1 cup orange juice
1/3 cup brandy
1 bottle (750 ml) of Spanish red wine
Garnish with orange wheels or slices
Add fruit and sugar to pitcher, then muddle for 30 seconds. Muddle once more after orange juice and brandy are added. Add red wine, then stir to combine ingredients. Add orange garnish and 1-2 cups of ice, and serve.
Until next week, enjoy responsibly.

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IDNR accepting public comment on area mine reclamation projects

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) is accepting public comment through May 22 about the abandoned mine lands reclamation projects that have been selected for work through President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

IDNR's Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Division was awarded \$75.7 million for land and water reclamation work at 55 abandoned mine sites throughout Illinois, including seven in Grundy and Will counties, during the first year of the grant.

IDNR is eligible to receive \$75.7 million per year for a total of 15 years through IIJA to address additional reclamation projects.

The Abandoned Mine Land program addresses environmental and safety problems at coal and non-coal mines that were abandoned prior to Aug. 3, 1977.

States may use the federal grants to address coal abandoned mine land problems, including hazards resulting from legacy coal mining that pose a threat to public health, safety, and the environment; water supply restoration; and coal abandoned mine land emergencies.

Comments will be accepted until May 22, 2023, and can be emailed to Lance.L.Range@illinois.gov or mailed to Lance Range, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Mines and Minerals, 1 Natural Resources Way, Springfield IL 62702.

Projects proposed for the first year of the grant and estimated cost include:

- Grundy County**
- Wilmington Star Mine No. 7 – Reclaim the vertical opening - \$10,000.
 - Gardner and Wilmington Coal Co. No. 1 – This five-acre area contains a one-acre gob pile and a settled shaft. Reclaim to prevent hazardous conditions -

\$100,000.

• Will County Coal Co. – Reclamation of areas with a dangerous impoundment and dangerous highwall where revetment mat is failing to prevent possible dam breach - \$805,200.

• Lake Tandem – Reclamation to correct a dangerous slide area and relocate a house - \$178,906.

Will County

• Murphy, Lindsy and Kasher No. 4 – Reclaim vertical openings and correct clogged stream lands to address flooded road and sinkholes - \$28,500

• Chicago Material, Wilmington and Vermilion – Cover gob material and correct vertical opening. This site is easily accessible within a town of more than 5,000 people and is considered a hazard - \$15,000.

• Novy Road Highwall – Correct 1,900 feet of dangerous highwall along a public roadway - \$1,124,800.

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Dine in or drive through with the pick up on East 1st Street

Includes: 3 pancakes, 2 sausage links, butter and syrup.

Electric vehicle event at JJC

Joliet Junior College is planning an Electric Vehicle Event (EVE 23) on Saturday, April 15 for all to learn more about EV charging stations, vehicles and automotive care.

A fully electric car never needs an oil change and the brakes last much longer as they generate power to the batteries.

The JJC Automotive Services school is partnering with the Sustainability Club to bring this powerful event to everyone from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. They welcome car dealerships to get involved and hope to raise funds for scholarships for students earning certificates to work on all types of electric and hybrid vehicles.

Trout season opens April 1

The 2023 Illinois Spring Trout fishing season is coming to three area locations starting Saturday, April 1.

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 18. On April 1 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 1. 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.

For more information about all site regulations, anglers should contact individual sites that will be stocked with catchable-size trout. Anglers are reminded to check the opening time of their favorite sites prior to the opening date.

The state reminds sportsmen that new licenses are required April 1 for the 2023 year.

Forest Preserve to host special sensory program

The Forest Preserve of Will County is hosting a Sensory Sunday on Sunday, April 2, from 11 a.m. to noon at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in

Channahon.

This independent program is for guests with sensory-processing needs, social anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder. Buddy bags, noise-

canceling headphones and handheld audio units will be available for use. Staff will be on hand to help. Free, all ages. Register by April 1.

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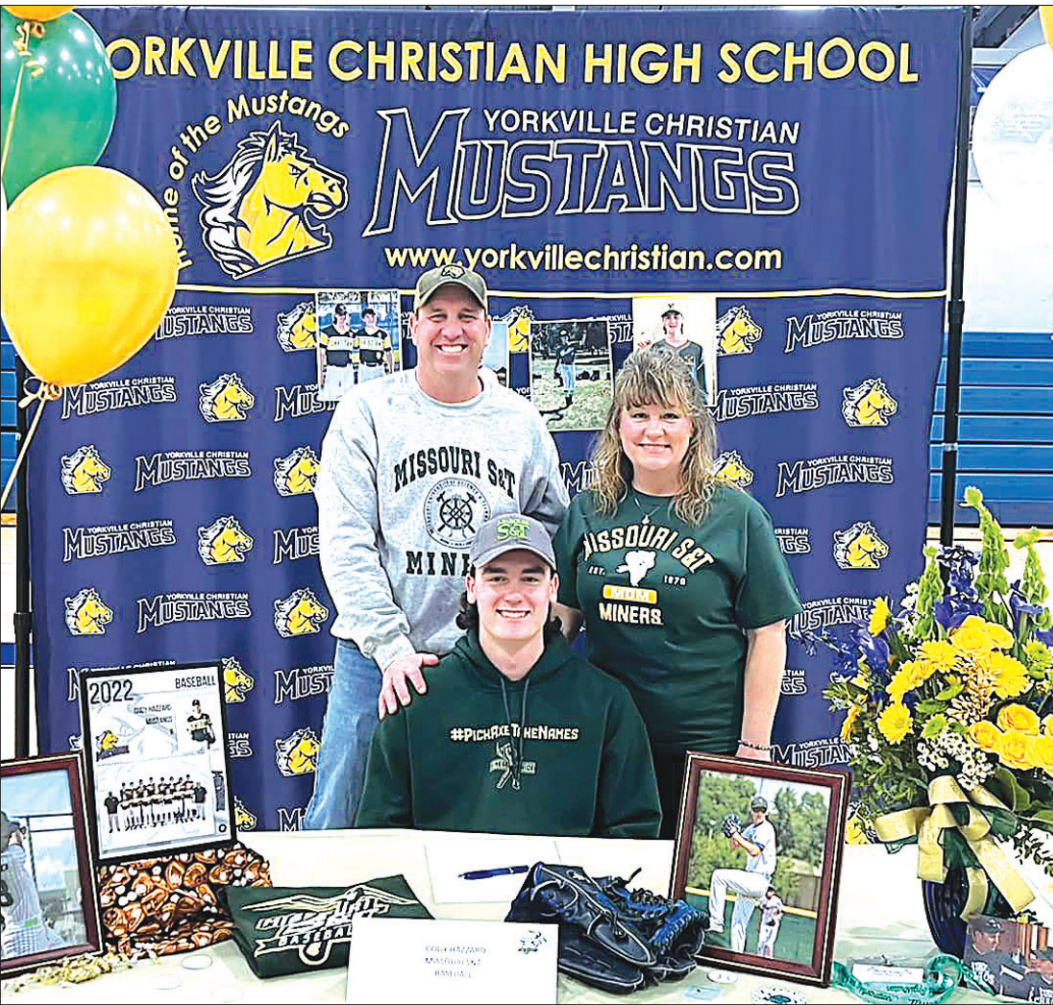
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Hazzard will pitch at Missouri S&T



CODY HAZZARD, a senior at Yorkville Christian High School in Yorkville, IL has committed to play baseball at Missouri University Science and Technology in Rolla, MO while continuing his academic and athletic careers. Hazzard led all IHSA 1A pitchers in 2022 with 87 strikeouts. He is the captain this season and the pitching staff's ace for the Mustangs. Hazzard excels in the classroom as well, as he has a 4.1 gpa and a perfect attendance record. He is with his parents Jim and Pam Hazzard of Mazon. His grandparents are Jim and Karen Hazzard of Wilmington.

Bennett advances legislation to remove roadblock for aspiring teachers

SPRINGFIELD—The Illinois Senate Education Committee voted unanimously to advance legislation from State Senator Tom Bennett that would remove one of the biggest issues stopping prospective teachers from making it to the classroom.

His legislation would suspend the current edTPA requirement, a much-criticized evaluation program that has regularly been cited as a major factor in the worsening teacher shortage.

"We continually hear that the current edTPA requirement is one of the biggest roadblocks for prospective teachers in education programs," said Bennett. "This legislation will waive the requirement for two years, helping to get more teachers into classrooms while we develop a better system."

Under current law, prospective teachers are required to pass the edTPA requirement to

complete their education program. The edTPA standard has been criticized for being difficult, inaccurate in predicting future performance, expensive for education students, and for taking too much time away from in-classroom training. The requirement has also been blamed for keeping diverse teachers out of classrooms.

Senate Bill 1488, filed by Bennett, would waive the edTPA requirement through August 31, 2025. The legislation would also create the Teacher Performance Assessment Task Force, which would be tasked with developing a new evaluation system for teaching students. The task force would be required to present its findings no later than August 1, 2024.

The legislation passed the Senate Education Committee on March 22.

Come hike the story trail

The Forest Preserve will be hosting a Four Rivers Story Trail Tuesday, April 4, through Tuesday, April 11, from 8 a.m. to sunset at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

Follow Finn and her dog Skeeter around a woodland trail in "Track that Scat!" by Carrie Ann Bradshaw. Read the story along the trail and discover the clues our native animals leave behind. Free, all ages.

Forest Preserve to hold Scout Day April 15

Scout Day - Spring Takes Flight will be hosted Saturday, April 15, from 10 a.m. to noon, at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

Scouts will move through stations focusing on how plants and animals use the power of flight to survive in the wild. Free, all ages. Register by April 14 at reconnectwithnature.org.

New child program at the Forest Preserve

The Forest Preserve of Will County will be hosting a new program for little ones and rainbows called "Rivers of Color - Little Explorers, Rainbows".

It will be held Wednesday, April 12, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

Bring children to Four Rivers to explore the colors of the rainbow with music, movement, a hike, hands-on activities, crafts and free play. Free, ages 3-5. Register by April 11.

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Oakwood Cemetery to hold Spring Clean-up

Oakwood Cemetery in Wilmington will be holding Spring Clean-Up during the month of April. A dumpster will be available on March 31. Two (2) organized volunteer clean up days have been scheduled for April 1st and 8th from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Please bring rakes and tarps to remove leaves. Your help is greatly appreciated. All wreaths, grave blankets and broken decorations must be removed and placed in the dumpster by April 30th.

Oakwood Cemetery is a non-profit organization operated and maintained solely by volunteers. Maintaining the beauty and improvements throughout the cemetery requires community support. Call (815) 735-5147 if you have any questions.

Rain barrel, compost bins to be available in Wilmington

Will County is teaming up with The Conservation Foundation to offer compost bins and rain barrels this Spring.

Order them on-line by April 30 and pick them up in Wilmington on Saturday, May 13.

A rain barrel will capture 70-90% of a typical rain fall, allowing some overflow to cascade across your lawn to storm drains in the street or

swales in some subdivisions.

You may use the water you captured for watering your garden, plants, trees, and bushes between rain events. This saves you money and reduces pressure on our drinking water sources.

Prices start at \$64.50, up to \$186.50 depending on the style. To place an order go to the event calendar at will-countygreen.com

New giant to greet Route 66 travelers



Free Press photo

CONCERNS THAT WILMINGTON may someday lose its biggest celebrity, the Gemini Giant, to the highest bidder has prompted a local effort to bring a new giant to the community. The proposal is to add a second Route 66 attraction, a white goose like those that populate the north island park, in front of Nelly's. Travelers would have plenty of room to pull over, park in the city lot, get a bite to eat at the restaurant and take their photo in front of the goose. "You would be a fool to believe this isn't a golden opportunity for Wilmington," planners said. "The golden egg has come for our community." Starting April 1 residents can join in the campaign for another giant by naming the gander. Email your entry on April 1 to news@fpnusa.com.

Lawmakers approve kindergarten reform, plan to address childhood literacy

BY ANDREW ADAMS
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

CHICAGO – Lawmakers are looking at several ways to improve learning for young students in Illinois.

On March 23, members of the House of Representatives approved a proposal that would require school boards in Illinois to provide full-day kindergarten starting with the 2027-2028 school year.

The measure, House Bill 2396, was met with bipartisan, though not universal, support, passing out of the House on Thursday on an 87-23 vote.

Some lawmakers were uneasy with the potential costs for school districts, particularly stemming from potential increases in staffing needs and facility space requirements.

"When this goes into effect in 2027, are we going to be ramped up enough to be able to provide additional teachers throughout kindergartens across Illinois?" Rep.

Dan Swanson, R-Alpha, asked during debate over the bill.

The worry about funding is echoed by some in the education field, including the Illinois Association of School Administrators, or IASA.

IASA chief of staff Emily Warnecke said in an interview that her organization supports the movement toward full-day kindergarten. But she said they are still concerned about a requirement that would force districts to raise their own capital funding to expand school facilities to accommodate full-day programs.

"The vast majority of districts who don't offer (full-day kindergarten), don't offer it because they don't have the space," Warnecke said.

Currently, about 80% of districts in Illinois offer full-day kindergarten.

The bill sets up a "Full-Day Kindergarten Task Force" to study the best way to implement the expansion of full-day kindergarten. The task force

will also be responsible for determining the criteria for districts' eligibility for a two-year extension to the deadline for rolling out full-day kindergarten.

The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

Literacy improvements
On Friday, the Senate unanimously approved Senate Bill 2243 from Senator Kimberly Lightford, D-Westchester, that would require the Illinois State Board of Education to develop a "comprehensive literacy plan."

In 2022, nearly 38% of Illinois' fourth grade students did not meet grade level reading standards, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress. This is roughly average and is not significantly lower than the nation's overall reading scores.

Deborah MacPhee, a researcher and professor at Illinois State University, said early literacy education has become politicized with debates between competing systems of reading instruction.

MacPhee said she liked that the bill involves "education stakeholders." She said this will contribute to the ongoing conversation around what sorts of educational programs teachers should use.

In a 2022 study published in the journal Reading Horizons, MacPhee and her team found that 97 percent of Illinois teachers use phonics in their classrooms to teach reading. But 80% of those teachers using published curriculum

for their phonics instruction, at least 41 different programs are used.

"We have to be educating teachers to be using programs effectively," she said.

Lightford's plan is not the only bill at the Statehouse in recent weeks aimed at improving childhood literacy. Representative Mary Flowers, D-Chicago, introduced a bill that would require schools to use phonics to teach reading, though it was met with push-back from teachers' unions.

Spaghetti dinner planned for April 15

The Wilmington Knights of Columbus will hold an all-you-can-eat spaghetti dinner on Saturday, April 15 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the St. Rose Hall, 626 S. Kankakee St., Wilmington.

Spaghetti with meatballs,

garlic bread, salad, desserts and drink will be served. Carry-outs will be available.

Cost is a free-will offering to help the Knights with community service projects throughout the year.



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Law change could help police in fighting crime

Could the 2022 massacre during Highland Park's July 4th parade have been prevented with a small change to state law?

It's never been publicly reported before, but several local sources confirmed this week that Highland Park Police Chief Louis Jogmen wanted to send a city-owned drone above the July 4th parade last year. That camera-equipped drone could've spotted Robert Eugene Crimo III on a building rooftop overlooking the parade before he fired 83 shots that killed seven people and wounded 48 more. But the chief couldn't launch that drone because of state law.

Chief Jogmen's police department has for years wanted to launch the camera drone, which the city uses for search and rescue and other emergencies, to fly over major public events. But state law prohibits law enforcement agencies from using the drones for things like event surveillance.

In other words, state law allows police to use drones in the aftermath of horrific and deadly mass shootings, but not to safeguard the public before they happen.

"The Illinois Freedom from Drone Surveillance Act



CAPITOL FACTS

Rich Miller

was passed in 2014 in an effort to balance evolving technology with important privacy concerns," explained Rep. Bob Morgan (D-Deerfield), who was at Highland Park's Independence Day parade last year. "Nearly ten years later, it has been unchanged

and undeniably stands in the way of law enforcement doing their jobs to keep our communities safe. We need to revisit and amend this law to prevent future mass shootings like what we endured on July 4th in Highland Park."

Highland Park and other municipalities are allowed to deploy helicopters with high tech video and tracking capabilities to surveil events, but not drones. Helicopters are expensive to purchase, operate and maintain and are very noisy (just ask anyone who lives in or near a high crime area in Chicago how loud they can be). Drones are relatively inexpensive, not difficult to fly and operate almost silently.

The quiet operation of the small drones is part of what worries the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois. People "could be observed in a host of different places - like the upper floor of a large condo building or one's back-

yard - without knowing that any surveillance was taking place," explained ACLU of Illinois spokesperson Ed Yohnka. "The same is not true for a helicopter and requires law enforcement to - essentially - announce their presence. This announcement could well deter criminal activity."

Yohnka is right that the loud noise made by helicopters might deter criminal activity (it's also a very real and obnoxious intrusion on the lives of countless thousands of South and West Side residents at all hours of the day and night). But, again, helicopters are expensive and difficult to fly and maintain. A town of 30,000 people isn't going to, and likely can't afford to shell out that kind of money. Even a place as wealthy as Highland Park.

Highland Park city manager Ghida Neukirch pointed to a bill introduced last year that would've allowed police to use the drones for proactive law enforcement. "Had we had the opportunity to use it last July 4, it would have provided our employees with an aerial view of the entire parade grounds and rooftops and the entire area," she said of the drone.

Sen. Julie Morrison (D-Lake Forest) went further, suggesting that Highland Park's drone could have prevented the mass killing.

Sen. Morrison was just a block away from the site of last

year's parade shooting and she's involved with the negotiations.

"We've been working with law enforcement to tailor a bill that will serve public safety concerns," Morrison told me last week, adding that she and others have been "meeting on a daily basis" to find a fix for the state's drone laws.

The City of Chicago has its own drone rules, and is reportedly skittish about any state law changes that could alter them.

"It's an important issue to me," Sen. Morrison said. She said giving the police the ability to use drones in a more proactive sense, "could have prevented the shooting in Highland Park."

The General Assembly passed sweeping legislation to ban assault weapons after the Highland Park shooting. But, so far, those are just words on paper as court challenges to the law work their way through the system.

People should have the right to attend public events without nervously scanning unprotected rooftops, or worse. Nobody is talking about giving the police unregulated and unfettered access to drones. Nobody is talking about blocking Chicago's drone program. It is time to come to an agreement.

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

Wolf Road bridge over I-80 to close

The Illinois Department of Transportation announced that a project to replace the bridge carrying Wolf Road over Interstate 80 in Mokena and Orland Park will resume today, weather permitting.

To accommodate the work, a full closure of Wolf Road between 183rd and 187th streets will be required through late August. A posted detour will direct motorists to 191st Street, LaGrange Road

(U.S. 45) and 179th Street. Motorists also should expect occasional overnight lane closures and lane shifts on I-80 approaching Wolf Road throughout the project.

The \$4.7 million project, which consists of replacing the existing bridge with a new wider structure, installing new storm sewers, along with resurfacing and landscaping, is anticipated to be completed later this fall.

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CLUES ACROSS

- Influential American political family
- Chantilly, de Menthe
- Within
- Pleasure seekers
- Computer manufacturer
- Home to college sports' Flyers
- Fungal disease
- Sleepwalk
- Spielberg sci-fi film
- Seasonable
- Taxis
- Radio direction finder (abbr.)
- Thin, narrow piece of wood
- "Mystic River" actor Sean
- Ingenuous
- Musical composition
- Turkish surname
- High or hilly area
- Wilco frontman
- Pour it on pasta
- Electric car company
- Sea eagle
- Walk with difficulty
- Sign of healing
- Boy
- Protein-rich liquid
- Washington city
- Individual portion of TV series (abbr.)
- Thought over
- Scads
- News agency
- Standard
- Deadlock
- Pre-Columbian empire
- Removed
- French commune

CLUES DOWN

- Large, dangerous animals
- Straighten out
- Family tree
- Large stinging paper wasp
- European river fish
- Cut down in size
- Denotes past
- Larry and Curly's partner
- Samoyedic ethnic group
- Male parent
- Specific gravity
- Demeaned oneself to
- Rigidly
- Yankovic is a "weird" one
- Belonging to me
- Path
- Airborne (abbr.)
- Level
- Atomic #94
- Born of
- Midway between northeast and east
- Northeastern bank
- Defunct airline
- Having no purpose
- A low wall
- Swedish city
- Earn a perfect score
- Atomic #81
- Beginner
- Give off
- Incorrect letters
- Telecommunication service provider (abbr.)
- Idyllic
- Popular beer
- A way to fine
- Evildoer
- More withered
- Seventh note of a major scale
- Commercial
- Abnormal breathing
- Moved more quickly
- City of Angels
- Partner to Pa
- Equally

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HELP WANTED

ABM is hiring at the Braidwood Constellation Station. Formerly known as Exelon. We have temporary day and evening positions available for the Spring Refueling Outage. We may also have full time positions as well. You can apply online at Indeed.com. Search for "Outage Cleaner in Braceville, IL." Must pass all required training and testing for Constellation. Starting rate is \$18-\$19 an hour. Benefits and vacation time are included with full time employment. Please contact our Braidwood office with any further questions. (815)417-2293.

Teresa's Family Styling has been serving the Wilmington community for the last 23 years on the corner of Water St.(102) & Kahler Rd in Wilmington. We are looking to hire a LICENSED STYLIST. An individual who is upbeat, hardworking & honest. A steady clientele is preferred but we're willing to work with the right candidate. Commission % based on experience. Please call 815-476-1955. ca11-14

NOW HIRING motivated; hard working; honest with a positive attitude; cooks; drivers & bartenders. Apply at Rachetti's Cafe & Pizzeria, 375 S. Broadway, Coal City. cc12-15

Part Time office help. Saturday's required. Must be able to lift 50lbs. Apply in person at Culligan of Coal City, 775 W. Chestnut St. Coal City. cc12-15

HELP WANTED

South Wilmington Grade School is in need of a part-time bookkeeper for approximately 10-20 hours per month. The candidate should have knowledge and experience with payroll, accounts payable, and bank reconciliation. Knowledge of QuickBooks is helpful. Interested candidates should submit a resume to South Wilmington Grade School, 375 Fifth St., P.O. Box 459, South Wilmington, IL 60474 or email chrhistensen@swil74.org. Questions can be directed to Superintendent Cindy Christensen at 815-237-2281.

South Wilmington Grade School is seeking applicants for the following positions for the 2023-2024 School Year. Certified Paraprofessional-Full Time: Preference given to applicants with a BA and qualify to hold a substitute license. Middle School Language Arts Teacher: Full time starting with the 2023-2024 school year. For all positions, send letter of interest and resume along with a copy of certification and endorsements if applicable to Mrs. Cynthia Christensen, Superintendent, P.O. Box 459, South Wilmington, IL 60474 by May 1, 2023 or email chrhistensen@swil74.org. Please indicate in the heading the position of interest. Start Date for all positions will be August 14, 2023.

Coal City Area Club is hiring Office Admin. Experience with Microsoft Office Apps; \$15 an hour; 4 days; 30 hours per week. Application at www.coalcityareacub.net or send resumes to info@coalcityareacub.net. ch13-14

Cinder Ridge Golf Course is looking for part-time help, must be 21. Pick up an application in the Pro Shop 8am-12pm, Mon-Fri. 815-476-4000. cc12-15

Office help needed at a local sportsmen's club. Seasonal part time hours. Experience with computers and knowledge of Excel and Access preferred. Please send inquiries to wccsc1946@gmail.com cc2-13

HELP WANTED

Reed-Custer Early Learning Center, located at RCHS and RCMS, is adding a position for a full-time early childhood teacher. Job details: Monday-Friday; 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.; 180 days per school year; \$19 per hour. Qualifications: Sixty semester hours of credits from an accredited college or university with six semester hours in courses related directly to child care and/or child development, from birth to age six. If you are interested in working for Reed-Custer CUSD255 and are qualified for this position, please email the director at pam.frencl@rc255.net

HOMES FOR RENT

Braidwood area, 3 BR, 2 bath, stove, refrigerator, C/A, W/D hookup, storage shed. Large lot & deck, 169 N Vernon Dr., Godley. \$1,250/mo. 1st, last, security, credit check. 815-476-6462.

LOST & FOUND

Lost - Female German Shepherd; 9 years old; black & tan. Lost near Dresden Power Plant on Feb. 25. Her name is Meeka and she is friendly. 815-942-9253 ca12-13

MISCELLANEOUS

Hall Rental - Available for parties, showers & meetings. Seats 100 people, full kitchen available. If interested call New Hope Presbyterian Church in Coal City, 815-634-8332. ch 27a-tfn

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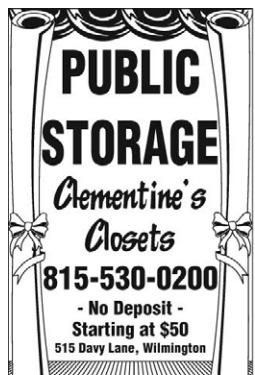
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REAL ESTATE

SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE of 404 N Outer Dr, Wilmington, IL 60481 (Single Family Home). On the 6th day of April, 2023 to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse Annex, 57 N. Ottawa Street, Room 201, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **Nationstar Mortgage LLC** Plaintiff V. **Ryan L. Zelek; et. al.** Defendant. Case No. 22 FC 1131 in the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois. Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by sub-

divisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact: **Codilis & Associates, P.C.** 15W030 N. Frontage Road Suite 100 Burr Ridge, Illinois 60527 P: 630-794-5300 F: 630-794-9090

PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. Published in the Free Press Newspapers on Wednesday, March 15, 22 & 29, 2023.

REAL ESTATE

SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE of 522 South Kankakee Street, Wilmington, IL 60481 (single family residential). On the 13th day of April, 2023 to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse Annex, 57 N. Ottawa Street, Room 201, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **Nationstar Mortgage LLC** Plaintiff V. **Mary N. Stanley; Unknown Owners and Non Record Claimants;** Defendant. Case No. 22 FC 0389 in the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois. Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by sub-

divisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact: **THE WIRBICKI LAW GROUP** 33 W. Monroe St. Suite 1540 Chicago, Illinois 60603 P: 312-360-9455

PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. Published in the Free Press Newspapers on Wed., March 22, 29 and April 5, 2023.

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IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT GRUNDY COUNTY - MORRIS, ILLINOIS NATIONSTAR MORTGAGE LLC Plaintiff, -v- SHIRRELL HALL et al Defendant 2022 FC 59 NOTICE OF SALE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on March 9, 2023, an agent for The Judicial Sales Corporation, will at 11:00 AM on April 26, 2023, at the Grundy County Courthouse, 111 East Washington Street front door entrance, MORRIS, IL, 60450, sell at a public sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate: Commonly known as 1093 BLACK DIAMOND DR, COAL CITY, IL 60416 Property Index No. 09-02-356-023 The real estate is improved with a residence. Sale terms: 25% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the sale payable to The Judicial Sales Corporation. No third party checks will be accepted. The balance, including the Judicial Sale fee for the Abandoned Residential Property Municipality Relief Fund, which is calculated on residential real estate at the rate of \$1 for each \$1,000 or fraction thereof of the amount paid by the purchaser not to exceed \$300, in certified funds/or wire transfer, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. No fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. The subject property is subject to general real estate taxes, special assessments, or special taxes levied against said real estate and is offered for sale without any representation as to quality or quantity of title and without recourse to Plaintiff and in "AS IS" condition. The sale is further subject to confirmation by the court. Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser will receive a Certificate of Sale that will entitle the purchaser to a deed to the real estate after confirmation of the sale. The property will NOT be open for inspection and plaintiff makes no representation as to the condition of the property. Prospective bidders are admonished to check the court file to verify all information. If this property is a condominium unit, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and the legal fees required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(1) and (g)(4). If this property is a condominium unit which is part of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1). IF YOU ARE THE MORTGAGOR (HOMEOWNER), YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN IN POSSESSION FOR 30 DAYS AFTER ENTRY OF AN ORDER OF POSSESSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 15-1701(C) OF THE ILLINOIS MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE LAW. You will need a photo identification issued by a government agency (driver's license, passport, etc.) in order to gain entry into our building and the foreclosure sale room in Cook County and the same identification for sales held at other county venues where The Judicial Sales Corporation conducts foreclosure sales. For information, examine the court file, CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C. Plaintiff's Attorneys, 15W030 NORTH FRONTAGE ROAD, SUITE 100, BURR RIDGE, IL, 60527 (630) 794-9876 THE JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION One South Wacker Drive, 24th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606-4650 (312) 236-SALE


You can also visit The Judicial Sales Corporation at www.tjsc.com for a 7 day status report of pending sales. CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C. 15W030 NORTH FRONTAGE ROAD, SUITE 100 BURR RIDGE IL, 60527 630-794-5300 E-Mail: pleadings@ilcslegal.com Attorney File No. 14-22-06330 Attorney ARDC No. 00468002 Case Number: 2022 FC 59 TJSC#: 43-1050 NOTE: Pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, you are advised that Plaintiff's attorney is deemed to be a debt collector attempting to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose. Case # 2022 FC 59 I3216169 Published in the Free Press Newspapers on Wed., March 22, 29 & April 5, 2023.

REAL ESTATE

shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and

that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact: **Codilis & Associates, P.C.** 15W030 N. Frontage Road Suite 100 Burr Ridge, Illinois 60527 P: 630-794-5300 F: 630-794-9090

PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. Published in the Free Press Newspapers on Wednesday March 15, 22 & 29, 2023.



Seeking Qualified Applicants for Firefighters/Paramedics

The Wilmington Fire Protection District is seeking qualified applicants to establish an eligibility list for the position of Firefighter/Paramedic with the District.

Starting Salary: \$59,731.88

QUALIFICATIONS

- Applicant must be at least 21 years of age and under 35 years of age at the time of submission of an application unless otherwise provided by state or federal law
- Be a citizen of the United States
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- Possess a valid class B non CDL driver's license in the State of Illinois
- Be certified as a Basic Operations Firefighter or Firefighter II through the Office of the State Fire Marshall in the State of Illinois prior to conditional offer.
- Be certified as a Paramedic in the State of Illinois (IDPH EMT-P) prior to conditional offer.

Applications will be available to qualified candidates March 13th, 2023 - April 17th, 2023 between the hours of 8:00am-3:00pm, Monday-Friday at Station #1, 501 N. Main Street, Wilmington, IL.

A valid driver's license must be presented in order to obtain an application. Only one application per candidate will be given.

Completed application shall be returned to the above address no later than 3:30 pm on April 17th, 2023. Failure to complete the application in its entirety shall be grounds for rejection from the process. Applicants must attend the following:

- Orientation/Written Exam: Monday, April 17th, 2023 at 6 pm Sharp (No one will be allowed in the room after 6 pm)
- Oral Interviews: Monday, April 24th and Wednesday, April 26th, 2023.
- Physical Ability: Must have a CPAT card with ladder climb issued no more than 365 days prior to conditional offer.

The Rules and Regulations of the Board of Fire Commissioners, Wilmington Fire Protection District, will govern all facets of the hiring process, a copy of which is available for viewing at the District's Station#1. If you have any questions please call (815)-476-6675.

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NEW LISTING GARDNER \$239,900 4 BR, 3 BA home is completely renovated and just waiting for you to move in and make it yours. Team Toler 815-715-5959. JR407	NEW LISTING BRAIDWOOD \$164,900 Look no further! Affordable 2 BR, 1 BA, 1 car garage on crawl. Be your own landlord. Call Tami 903-54 pole bldg. On approx. 25 acres. Shawn 747-6670. MR17900	SOLD MORRIS \$469,000 4 BR, 2 BA house w/ two car att. garage and 7 buildings including a 90x54 pole bldg. On approx. 25 acres. Shawn 747-6670. MR17900	COAL CITY \$449,500 Well maintained, 3 acres, 3020 sq. ft., 3 BR, 2.5 BA, 30x48 pole bldg, beanie sunrm, RV pkg, CC Sdbls. Rod 815-674-2583. MGS180	MAZON \$398,000 3 BR, 2 full & 2 half BA. Back home w/ geothermal heating and cooling for low utility bills. Text Shawn 815-474-6670. WM12		
SOLD MAZON \$269,900 Remodeled brick ranch home in Coal City School District. 2 car garage+24x24 out building. Shawn 474-6670. FH170	GRUNDY COUNTY'S #1 HOME SELLER (815) 942-9190 SEE EVERY HOME ON THE MARKET AT C21.COM Source: Midwest Real Estate Database (MLS) Single Family Detached Homes Sold in 2022 By Grundy County Offices.			1802 N. Division St., Morris	MAZON \$225,000 Truly exceptional 3 BR, 2 BA home w/ 2 big garages 20x30 and 24x24 on a double lot. Call/Txt Christy 815-693-5757. MS1211	MAZON \$225,000 Adorable & cozy 3 BR, 1.5 BA ranch home which has been completely remodeled! Call Kelly 815-823-6147. HR1113
GARDNER \$150,000 3 BR, 1 BA ranch with large lot. All appliances stay. 24 ft. above-ground pool and hot tub. Kelly 815-823-6147. EU303	MAZON \$119,000 2 BR, 1.5 BA roomy home. Large corner lot 24x24 det. grg. 12x12 shed. 27 ft. above ground pool. Crawl. Della 258-6467. HL411	MAZON \$129,900 Why rent when you can own this 2 BR home right in the heart of small town. Mazon. Loric+ Owen Toler 715-5959. DC602	VERONA \$108,000 2 story home in small quiet town. 4 BR, 1.1 BA needs work. Lg rooms/yard. Call Della 815-258-6467. AO432	COAL CITY \$39,900 Here is your opportunity to own a great lot! Perfect spot to build in an area of other upscale homes! Theresa Lamb 735-8494. PP62		

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Lady Comets kicking it



KICKING THE BALL AWAY from Beecher is Caelan Cole. The Comets' next game will be on April 3 away at Momence.



GETTING THE BALL away from Beecher is Brooklyn Harding who scored one goal on Thursday giving the Comets the final score of 2-2.



HANNAH BUDICK kicks the ball away from their goal on Thursday's game at home.

Players earn Comet basketball top honors



THE REED-CUSTER varsity boys basketball team presented trophies to the top players for the season. Recipients were (from left): Jacob Reardon - Most Improved Player award; Wes Shats - Rebound Award, Mr. Comet Award & MVP; Josh Bohac - Comet Hustle Award; Jake McPherson - Most Steals; Lucas Foote - Free-throw Award; and Jace Christian - Comet Hustle Award, Most Assists, Comet Charge Award.

Easter egg hunt at Old Smokey Park this Saturday

The Braidwood Park District's Annual Children's Easter egg hunt in the Old Smokey City Park will take place on Saturday, April 1, starting promptly at 1 p.m with the youngest age group.

- Age groups are as follows:
- 1-3 years at the Tee-Ball Field

and parents/guardians may walk with their children as the children pick up eggs.

- 4-6 years at the north boys baseball field. If necessary, one parent or guardian may walk with the child as the children pick up the eggs.
- 7-9 years at the south girls soft-

ball field. Parents/guardians will NOT be allowed in the grass area where the eggs are spread out.

Treat bags will be given out for all children (while supplies last). Mr. & Mrs. Easter Bunny will be making a special appearance to meet with children before & after the hunt.

Be sure to arrive early and check in under the pavilion between the baseball fields prior to the start of the hunt. The first 300 children to register will also receive a free Easter basket complements of the Braidwood Knights of Columbus Council 1574 and the Braidwood Lions Club.

Parking will be available in the south parking lot off of First Street near the baseball fields. More information along with additional rules for parents/guardians can be found on the Braidwood Park District's website or Braidwood Lions Club's Facebook page. Rain Date is Sunday April 2.

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Art students recognized for work



ART STUDENTS from Reed-Custer High School recently had their works submitted to the University of St. Francis High School Art Exhibition. Recognized during the March meeting of the board of education by RCHS art instructors John Vorris (left) and Jessica Baron (right) are (from left) Joey Leadingham (senior) with "Glass Still Life," a photography print that won an Award of Excellence; Haley Budick (senior) with "Good Morning," a colored pencil drawing with a book page background that won an Award of Excellence; and Seth Johnson (senior) submitted "David," a graphite and charcoal drawing that won an honorable mention award. Budick also created "From the Ground Up," a colored pencil drawing that won first runner-up in Riverside Healthcare's Art 4 Heart in February 2023, and "Cupcake," a colored pencil drawing that was selected for an honorable mention award at the Chicagoland 4x5 show hosted at Oswego High School this past fall. Not pictured: Alexandra Bohac (senior) who painted "Bloom," is an acrylic painting that won an Award of Excellence. Bohac's piece also won grand prize at Riverside Healthcare's Art 4 Heart in spring of 2022.

Lady Comets open with a win but errors hurt at Herscher

The Reed-Custer girls softball team ran into a buzz-saw Monday when they lost 16-1 at Herscher.

Yes, the hosting Tigers were that good.

After giving up a run in the first inning to the Lady Comets when Halie LaGrange drew a walk to score, Herscher scored one run in the first, five in the second, four in the third and six in the fourth to enforce the mercy run.

The lone Comet hit was a double by catcher Mya Beard who also had two stolen bases. Grace Cavanaugh and LaGrange also finished with a stolen base.

Herscher collected 13 hits and took advantage of eight Comet errors.

Suffering the loss on the mound was Lady Comet Addison Brown who struck out three, walked two and was tagged for 16 runs, four of which were earned.

Opening victory

The Lady Comets started the season off with 6-1 win against Clifton Central. An early lead on a single helped Reed-Custer Lady Comets score 3 runs in the first inning ending it 3-1.

Clifton just couldn't get their feet on the bases never scoring again. While RCHS scored two runs in the second and one run in the fourth with a final of 6-1.

Addison Brown earned the win. The pitcher surrendered one run on three hits over seven innings, striking out 10.

Grace Cavanaugh and Mya Beard each had a triple. Delaney Bruciak had 2 hits and laid down a great bunt in 1st inning.

Halie LaGrange, Addison Brown, Jessica Janopoulos, Leah Grace and Sydnee Billingsley each had one hit.

Reed-Custer hosts Sandwich on Thursday before traveling to Ottawa Friday.



MYA BEARD was behind the plate for Reed-Custer during Tuesday's 6-1 win over Clifton Central. The Comets' next game will be at home on Thursday against Sandwich.



PICKING UP THE BALL is Halie LaGrange on Tuesday's game at home. Halie got one hit leading the Comets.



EMMA WILSON throws the ball back to the pitcher from the out-field on Tuesday's game.



JAKE MCPHERSON makes it home during Monday night's game against GSW. Jake got two hits and scored twice.



THROWING THE ball to third base is Colin Eaparza. The Comets will take on Sandwich and Manteno in the coming week.

Comets streak now three

As of Monday, the Reed-Custer baseball season remained unblemished at 3-0.

It was appropriate that Comet pitcher Jake McPherson would strike out the last two batters for Herscher, throwing a perfect game in a 10-0 shutout over five innings.

McPherson surrendered no runs on no hits over five innings, striking out 14 and walking none.

The Comets scored two runs in the second and one in the third before erupting for four runs in the fourth inning.

Comets batters contributing to the big inning included Connor Esparza,

Colin Esparza, Brady Tyree and Joe Bembenek who all drove in runs. Bembenek and McPherson both finished with doubles.

Bembenek led Comets with two hits in three at bats. The Comets didn't commit a single error in the field. Cameron Smith had the most chances in the field with 14.

Upending the Irish

The Comets beat Bishop McNamara 4-2 last Tuesday.

The Comets scored one run in the second and another run in the third inning to take a 2-0 lead. The next time RCHS scored was the fifth inning while

holding Bishop Mac scoreless through six innings. The hosting Irish put two runs on the board their final at-bat but the Comets shut them down in the end for the win.

McPherson was excellent on the mound, throwing 6 shutout innings, while allowing 2 hits and striking out 14. McPherson also went 1-for-2, hitting a double.

Connor Esparza and Colin Esparza led the way offensively with a pair of hits each. Joe Stellano and Brady Tyree added a hit a piece. Cameron Smith was quick on the bases with 3 steals.

The Comets host Sandwich on Thursday and Manteno on Monday.