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Auditor: City expenses exceeded revenue

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

An audit of the City of Braidwood's books reveals that expenses exceeded revenues by \$721,000 in 2023, but the budget overall it is still in good shape.

The audit was given during the March 25 Braidwood City Council Meeting. Sara McKenna, CPA and senior manager at Wipfli, LLP, in Sterling provided an audit recap of fiscal year 2023.

According to Wipfli's report, Braidwood's overall net position decreased by \$1,283,330, and net position of business-type activities increased by \$561,812.

Revenues totaled \$9,110,168 and expenses totaled \$9,831,686.

The General Fund reported a net increase of \$917,034, resulting in a fund balance of \$2,394,926.

McKenna noted that expenses increased \$1.7 million from fiscal 2022, mostly due to the \$1.8 million redevelopment expense for the Arnie Bauer Chevy GMC and D'Orazio Ford car dealership agreement.

No further audit is required at this time as federal funds expended was under \$750,000.

TIF funds

McKenna focused on two finance areas: Braidwood's Financial Statement and TIF (Tax Increment Funding) Audit, determining the city's compliance with TIF, a tool used by municipalities to fund development projects in

designated areas. TIF provides incentives to attract private investors to town.

McKenna noted that Braidwood is in compliance with regard to TIF and funds are clean with the state of Illinois.

In regard to the city's Annual Financial Report, McKenna noted that she was not aware of any internal "control deficiencies," which refers to flaws in the design or operation of a control that could allow misstatements to occur and remain undetected.

Pension issue

McKenna issued a "Qualified 'modified' opinion on basic financial statements due to not implementing GASB 75," which in this case refers to an

increase in the police pension fund of \$1.9 million in fiscal year 2023.

The specific area of concern was retirees who remain on the city's health insurance and life insurance. The auditing firm did not have sufficient information at this time to make a judgment. McKenna said a study would be beneficial to determine the reason for the significant increase.

"Without that study, we don't know what the liability is for," McKenna said. "So, we do issue a qualified opinion in regards to that. It's just something that you have to kind of outweigh the cost benefit analysis of whether or not you want to do that, going forward at some point and get a

clean audit opinion for continuing."

Collateral

McKenna noted a single bank deposit made without collateralized deposit which means using an asset as a guarantee to secure a deposit, ensuring the deposit is safe if the bank fails.

"There is an Illinois statute that it does want all public funds to be fully collateralized at the banks," McKenna said. "What that means is in the event of bank failure, you could have a risk of loss for those funds that are not collateral. The FDIC will cover your deposits up to a certain point, and then above that you would need to work with the bank

SEE AUDIT PAGE 2

Headrick now with Yankees



Courtesy photo

BRAIDWOOD NATIVE Brent Headrick made the 40-man roster for the New York Yankees, recently getting traded by the Minnesota Twins. The former Reed-Custer pitcher had his Yankee debut on Saturday, taking the mound in the seventh inning to strikeout two batters and get a popup during a 20-9 victory over Milwaukee. Headrick's first Major League appearance was April 19, 2023 with the Twins after being drafted in December of 1997. Supporting Brent during the move to the Yankees were his parents Wade and Michelle, along with his wife, Hannah and their son Callum. Headrick was an All State pitcher for the Comets, anchoring the 2016 team to a 2A state championship.

Council budgets \$2.9 million to put more officers on every shift

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

A public hearing for the proposed annual budget for fiscal 2025-26 was held March 25 in conjunction with the Braidwood City Council meeting.

City Clerk Sarah Weaver reminded residents that the budget has been available for review at city hall since Feb. 25.

The proposed budget total for the General Fund is \$5,570,562.

The General Fund is the city's primary operating fund used to account for and finance day-to-day expenses.

The \$5,570,562 will fund the Animal Control Department, ESDA, Public Property and Buildings, and Recreational. It also funds costs for elected officials (\$40,000) and \$350,000 for salary and benefits for the administration department.

The total Street Department budget is \$975,500, and the total for Braidwood Police Department is \$2,973,212.

The budget for the Enterprise Fund is \$4,503,600 and includes: Water revenue at \$2,094,000, and sewer revenue at \$1,220,000.

Expenditures include \$600,000 earmarked for garbage services, and another \$600,000 for water/sewer department salaries.

Salt for roads is expected to run \$121,155.70.

Budget amendments

For the sake of clarity, Accounts and Finance Commissioner Kim Earling, recommended amendments to verbiage in the proposed budget, specifically:

On Page 4, in the police department's budget, changing the word "Sergeants" to "Salaries" as the original term is too limiting, and includes salaries for all department employees.

On Page 6, under "Recreational," Earling suggested keeping "Recreational" as a line item and eliminating specific sub-heads, i.e., dog park, splash pad.

On Page 8, Earling requested the salary for the proposed position of supervisor be included, and that the line item for "Capital Outlay" include "Two generators and two well pumps."

The council approved Earling's proposed revisions.

Police dept. budget

Ron Wilczak, commissioner of Health and Safety, commented on the police department budget's increase from \$2,635,243 to \$2,973,212 in fiscal 2026. He commented that calls for services have increased.

"We currently have 20 officers of which there are five that are part-time," Wilczak said. "Then we have a chief and four sergeants. Our goal is to have a

SEE COUNCIL PAGE 2



Photo by Eric Fisher

BIOLOGIST TRISTAN WIDLOE with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources handles a 21-inch walleye from the Kankakee River to be taken to the hatchery.

Walleye roundup at a record rate

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

Mounting evidence of the success of the walleye stocking program for the Kankakee River reached a record high last week.

Biologists with the Illinois Department of Natural Resource witnessed their best walleye roundup ever, more than doubling the catch rate from the previous record and needing just 12 minutes to collect enough brood fish.

They motored their electro-fishing boat from the tip of the North Island park just before noon Wednesday and needed only one pass along a two-

block stretch upstream of the railroad bridge to find their fish.

Retired biologist Steve Pescitelli, who has been working the program since it started 25 years ago, was one of two "scoopers" on the front of the boat. He and the fisheries technician Seth Love netted three to four fish at a time.

"That's the most walleye I've seen in a run like that, ever," Pescitelli commented. "It's just unbelievable the number of fish we got inside of 12 minutes."

Streams biologist Tristan Widloe, reported Friday that 82 walleye (21 females, 61 males) were collected. The average length was 18 inches, with

a 24-inch male being the largest.

Ideally, the state gathers about 80 walleye at river locations between Kankakee and Wilmington, creeling the right combination of males and females. But this year there was no need to go anywhere else.

"The Wilmington pool has become exception for collecting enough fish. We hit it the week before and pulled in a decent amount then. They weren't quite as ready as we would have liked so our timing looks much better today," Widloe

SEE WALLEYE PAGE 2



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WALLEYE ROUNDUP—Fisheries technician Seth Love nets one walleye while another surfaces while electrofishing for brood stock in the Kankakee River on Monday. At left is biologist Steve Pescitelli while at the helm is biologist Tristan Widloe.

Walleye, continued from page 1

said.

The adult walleye are trucked to the LaSalle Fish Hatchery where they spawn about 1.5 million eggs. Under hatchery conditions, those eggs result in about 800,000 fry. By the time they're grown to 1.6-inch fingerlings, the offspring number around 120,000, enough to restock the Kankakee and Iroquois rivers.

The adult fish are returned to the river, which was done on Friday. "Our catch rate was 176 walleye per hour, which is well above our target catch rate of 15-20 per hour," Widloe said. "Honestly, the catch rate of 176 is a bit misleading as it's based on just one sample but it was

a phenomenal run."

The best previous catch rate occurred in 2006 at 77.3 fish per hour. The best year for heaviest fish was in 2016 when they netted two females that tipped the scales at 10 pounds.

Pescitelli, who came back for the roundup, said it was reassuring to see the walleye comeback that was started 25 years ago.

"We know from marking the fry that 70 percent of the fish collected were raised in the hatchery," Pescitelli commented. "That's a sign that little natural reproduction is taking place. There little doubt in my mind that the program has given the

river population a real boost. I know if I lived a little closer to Wilmington, you'd probably see me fishing a lot off of the Wilmington park," he quipped.

Fisherman Jack Bruno, of Joliet, couldn't agree more. He stopped his fishing when he saw the DNR boat show up and volunteered to shuttle the fish from the boat to the hatchery truck.

"These guys have done an outstanding job in bringing the walleye back. It used to be you had a good day if you caught one walleye. Now, a good day is catching three or four fish," Bruno commented.

City will continue to work with CMAP to develop a comprehensive plan

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

At the March 25 Braidwood City Council meeting, the council adopted an official comprehensive plan for the city of Braidwood.

George Kocek, Chairman of the Braidwood Planning and Zoning Committee, presented the plan to the council.

Essentially, the approved plan represents a continuation of Braidwood's relationship with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).

CMAP is a state-authorized regional planning agency that coordinates with partners to develop and implement plans that advance shared goals and priorities related to transportation, the economy, the environment and other quality-of-life issues.

Though the city has had a relationship with CMAP since approximately 2004, the relationship was solidified in January, 2017 when Braidwood received

a grant from CMAP to assist in the creation of a new comprehensive plan.

The goal of regional plans is to attain regional economic prosperity through growth, resilience, and prioritized investment.

Market analysis of Braidwood

After months of data collection and public engagement, CMAP delivered its market analysis of Braidwood to the council with the objective of creating a new comprehensive plan.

Dozens of Braidwood residents attended an open house hosted by CMAP held at Fossil Ridge Public Library.

Residents in attendance were encouraged to review the results of CMAP's 20 months of research on housing, populations, business, infrastructure, land use and capital improvements. CMAP also asked for suggestions from those in attendance, with plans to present all findings to the city council the next month.

CMAP representatives delivered a presentation to the Braidwood City Council on the results of the data collection.

CMAP shared that the population of adults 65 and older is increasing, and about one-third of households earn under \$50,000 annually. In senior households, income was found to be typically less than \$35,000 per year.

What residents want

CMAP's research indicated that residents moved to Braidwood because of the relatively low property taxes. Residents indicated they want to see a more diverse tax base and new businesses while maintaining a small town atmosphere.

Some of the goals set by CMAP included:

- Developing an image or brand for Braidwood.
- Increase retail and restaurant awareness of Braidwood.
- Make Interstate 55 travelers more aware of local businesses and attractions.
- Improve the appearance of businesses.
- Preserve/reuse older

buildings downtown.

- Identify what types of businesses are—and are not—wanted.

Based on research, CMAP also recommended a dog park, improvement of existing playgrounds, slashpad, walking and bike paths, and enhancement of existing recreation

Change is desirable

Commissioner Ron Wilczak expressed support for the partnership between Braidwood and CMAP.

"This plan was written specifically for our town with many studies of our housing, residents, businesses and land," he said. "This plan will be the key to the city of Braidwood—its future economic development, and for the health and safety of our city."

By adopting the comprehensive plan, Braidwood is making a commitment to continue to work with CMAP to further develop a plan and to ultimately implement the agency's recommendations.

Audit, continued from page 1

to get collateralized."

ARPA Grant

The city received an \$841,000 grant from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). ARPA is a federal stimulus bill to aid public health and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The city of Braidwood received the grant in fiscal year 2022 and fiscal year 2023, of which \$801,000 is reported as deferred. As of April 30, 2023, the city of Braidwood had spent \$40,000 of ARPA funds. An audit may be triggered in the future as the city spends down ARPA funds.

McKenna noted that at this time no single audit will be required.

General Fund

Commissioner Ron Wilczak asked McKenna how financially stable Braidwood is, mentioning, Cris Miroballi of Kasperek Certified Public Accountants, who addressed residents at the March 11 town hall meeting. At that time, Miroballi rated Braidwood's financial soundness as 10 out of 10, stating the city was in excellent financial shape.

"He [Miroballi] said that he was very impressed and that he thought we were at the top echelon," Wilczak said.

McKenna explained that her presentation did not focus on the general fund; she was focusing more on government-wide financial statements and pointing out areas of potential concern.

"I think you are fine there," McKenna said of the General Fund.

Council, continued from page 1

sergeant on patrol on every shift."

Wilczak said that pursuant to the SAFE-T Act which implements several reforms on how policing is performed and how officers are held accountable for misconduct, having a sergeant on each shift is desirable.

"Paperwork for an arrest requires some interaction between a patrol officer and a supervisor," Wilczak said. "A sergeant becomes a sergeant because they become qualified, tested and verified. They go over any arrest reports with the patrol officer and make sure that all the information is correct."

Resident inquiries

A resident questioned the amount budgeted for vehicles.

Dale Walsh, Streets and Public Improvements Commissioner, addressed the question, reiterating that many city vehicles are older and need to be replaced or will need to be replaced in the foreseeable future.

"We're spending time sending vehicles to the dealerships every other month," he said.

With regard to the recent failure of the water tower on the ground of city hall, a resident asked if enough was budgeted to take potential emergencies into consideration.

Warren Wietting, Public Buildings and Property Commissioner, explained that the budget was devised taking emergency expenses into consideration.

City administrator Tony Altiery, concurred. "There is extra in the budget for water and sewer issues—about \$450,000," Altiery said. "We're doing it 100 percent the correct way."

As there were no objections, the council approved the proposed fiscal year 2026 budget.

City updates

Altiery updated the council on the Federated Bank that will be coming to town as early as mid-April. Altiery told the council that the old bank offered savings and loan and commercial services only. Federated Bank, on the other hand, is a full service institution.

"You've had a lot of people say, 'Well, you're not bringing in a new bank, you're bringing an old bank,'" Altiery said. "A couple years ago, they were trying to do a full service bank, but couldn't find facilities. The new one going in is a full service bank."

Altiery also updated the council about the progress on the proposed data center planned for Reed Road. He said that barring complications, the builder will appear before the planning and zoning committee in May.

Lead Line Survey online

Sarah Weaver reminded homeowners that the EPA requires information about lead lines in homes.

"We now have a submittable form for the EPA Service Line Survey that is required," Weaver said "It is on the city's website and the home page. You just click the Lead Line Survey logo and it'll take you right to the survey. Once you complete the survey it'll automatically be submitted back to us here at city hall."

Police statistics

Ron Wilczak shared police department statistics for March 11 to 24. Total calls 271; case reports 20, arrests 2 charges 4, traffic stops 15, citations 34, written warnings 61, semi violations 1 and one parking ticket.

Bill payment

The council approved motions to pay bills in the amount of \$351,014.18, and payroll in the amount of \$89,290.59.

Garden cleanup to be held on April 5

The Braidwood Area Healthy Community Coalition is seeking assistance in preparing Braidwood's Community Garden for planting season.

The Community Garden Prep Day will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., aturday, April 5 at the coalition's offices at 465 E. Reed St.

During the event, you may learn how to sponsor a garden box, sign up for the garden committee, or become a volunteer.

A limited supply of garden gloves and tools will be available. You're encouraged to bring your own tools.

Community hours are available upon request. For information, call the coalition at (815) 390-5024.

Mobile food pantry coming to Braidwood April 14

The Village is a church that works with the community to help where it is needed the most.

Many families are struggling to bring food to the table. That is why The Village is partnering with Northern Illinois Food Bank to host a mobile food pantry at the Reed-Custer Middle School, 407 Comet Drive, Braidwood, on Monday, April 14, at 5 p.m.

Godley Public Water District plans hearing on tentative budget

PUBLIC NOTICE

A Public Hearing concerning the Tentative Budget Ordinance for the Godley Public Water District for the fiscal year beginning May 1, 2025 and ending on April 30, 2026 will be held at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 23, 2025 at the Water Treatment Plant, 440 South Center Street, Godley, IL. 60407. Said Ordinance was placed on file for public inspection on March 19, 2025

/s/ Joe Cosgrove, Secretary
Published in the Braidwood Journal, April 2, 2025.

Godley Park District to hold hearing on ammended Budget & Appropriation ordinance

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE & PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
(Change of April Monthly Meeting Date)

The Tentative Amended Combined Budget & Appropriation Ordinance for the Godley Park District for the fiscal year beginning May 1, 2024, and ending on April 30, 2025, has been placed on file for public inspection for a period of 30 days beginning on March 11, 2025.

Said Ordinance may be inspected at the Godley Park District Administration Office Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

A Public Hearing concerning the Tentative Amended Combined Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for the Godley Park District for the fiscal year beginning May 1, 2024 and ending on April 30, 2025, will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, April 10, 2025, at the Park District Community Center, 500 South Kankakee Street, Godley, Illinois, 815-458-6129. April's monthly meeting will take place after the Public Hearing.

/s/ Darrell Schott
Secretary
Godley Park District
Board of Commissioners
Published in the Braidwood Journal, April 2, 2025.

Godley Park District to sell bonds

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CONCERNING THE INTENT OF THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS OF THE GODLEY PARK DISTRICT, WILL AND GRUNDY COUNTIES, ILLINOIS TO SELL \$750,000 GENERAL OBLIGATION PARK BONDS

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Godley Park District, Will and Grundy Counties, Illinois (the "District"), will hold a public hearing on the 10th day of April, 2025, at 10:00 o'clock A.M. The hearing will be held at the Godley Park District Community Center Conference Room, 500 South Kankakee Street, Godley, Illinois. The purpose of the hearing will be to receive public comments on the proposal to sell bonds of the District in the amount of \$750,000 for the payment of land condemned or purchased for parks, for the building, maintaining, improving and protecting of the same and the existing land and facilities of the District and for the payment of the expenses incident thereto.

By order of the President of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Godley Park District, Will and Grundy Counties, Illinois.

DATED the 20th day of March, 2025.

Darrell Schott
Secretary, Board of Park Commissioners,
Godley Park District, Will and Grundy Counties, Illinois
Published in the The Braidwood Journal on April 2, 2025.

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher



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Cleaning up, but why in Spring?

It's officially Spring. That means that flowers, warm breezes and fun times outdoors are just around the corner. But to my mother, it meant spring house cleaning. I could never figure out why people wanted to ruin a wonderful season with housework. Today we clean up 19th century style.



Sandy Vasko

For the larger part of the 1800's, most homes were heated with small stoves, usually located in the parlor, or any other part of the house where people gathered. These were put up in the fall along with the stove pipes, and usually vented out a side wall not a chimney. They burned coal, although you could burn wood in them as well. The result of burning coal was evident all over the house, a thin layer of black soot covering everything. In the spring the stove was removed along with the pipes, cleaned, oiled down and stored for the warm season. The hold in

the wall was usually covered with a round decorative metal plate. Heavy curtains that were hung in the fall to keep out drafts were removed and replaced with lace ones to keep out the bugs while letting in the light. Since the winter curtains were not washable, they were hung on the line and beaten to get the dust and soot out.

Heavy carpets that were spread in the fall to keep the feet warm then were removed as well. We would use a vacuum to clean them, but that modern device had not been invented yet. What was a housekeeper to do?

In the advice column of the Joliet Signal in September of 1873 we read, "By the middle of winter dusty carpets become a great annoyance to housekeepers, and the use of the broom raises a cloud of dust which settles in every crack and cranny."

"To remedy this, take a pint of bran, stir in enough water to merely dampen it, and then scatter it about

the floor before sweeping. Besides laying the dust, the bran brightens the colors wonderfully, and it is surprising to see how fresh an old, faded carpet will look." "Snow is good to prevent dusty sweeping, but the room must be cold, or it will melt and soil more than it cleanses." My mother did this with throw rugs. During a very cold winter day, she would lay the rugs on top of the snow, throw more "dry" snow on them, and sweep them down. It really did brighten up the colors and seemed to clean them pretty well.

The article goes on to say, "Carpets should always have clean, dry straw evenly strewn under them; hay will not answer, as in damp weather it soon becomes musty. A think felted article is manufactured for that purpose, but thought it save the carpet from wearing upon the sometimes uneven floor, it does not answer the purpose of straw."

The next thing to do in the spring is dealing with the anticipated horde of creepy crawlies that appear in the house. And even in the cleanest of houses, bed bugs could be a problem. The Signal article says that

the solution to this problem was a solution, that is, a mixture of two pounds of alum dissolved in three quarts of water. Boil this until the alum is totally dissolved.

Then the paper recommended, "Apply while hot with a brush or use a syringe to force the liquid in the cracks of the wall and the bedstead. Scatter the powdered alum freely in all those places, and you will soon be rid of these insect nuisances which fill one with disgust."

Now for the painted walls, an 1862 Wilmington article recommends, "Use but little water at a time; keep it warm and clean by changing often. A flannel cloth is better than cotton. Be careful of soap, put but a little soap or skim milk in the water; add soap to the cloth when needed."

"A saucer of sifted ashes, used where paint is badly smoked or fly specks are thick, is better than soap; wipe last with clean damp towel, and don't spill a drop of water."

Now where did I put that saucer of sifted ashes I'd been saving?



THE EASTER BUNNY says keep it a secret that candy eggs will be hidden at Old Smokey City Park in Braidwood on Saturday, April 12 starting at 1 p.m. for the annual egg hunt by the Braidwood Park District.

Easter egg hunt to be held April 12

The Braidwood Park District's annual Children's Easter Egg Hunt will take place Saturday, April 12, beginning at 1 p.m. at Old Smokey City Park.

Age groups and locations are as follows:

1-3 years-old: Tee-Ball Field Parents/Guardians may walk with their children as the children pick up eggs.

4-6 years-old: North boys' baseball field): If necessary, one parent or guardian may walk with the child as the children pick up the eggs.

7-10 years-old: South girls' softball 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. and Mrs. Easter Bunny will be making a special appearance to

meet with children before and after the hunt.

Check-in will begin at noon under the pavilion between the baseball fields. The first 400 children to check in will also receive a free Easter basket, compliments of the Braidwood Knights of Columbus Council 1574 and the Braidwood Lions Club.

Please park in the south parking lot off of First Street near the baseball fields. More information and additional rules for parents/guardians may be found on the Braidwood Lions Club's Facebook page.

The rain date for the hunt will be Sunday, April 13, same times.

Old Smokey Park is located at 245 W First Street.



ARCHS STUDENTS OF the month for March are (from left) Wyatt Crater (Senior), Emma O'Neill (SR), Bri Morrissey (FR), Alyssa Wollenzien (SO), Alex Garcia (JR), Kadance Van Duyne (FR), Tyson Whittum (JR), Brayden Landgraf (FR), and James Crews (JR).

Church to have annual flower sale

The First Presbyterian Church of Braidwood are selling hanging baskets of flowers for \$25. They will be available Tuesday, April 29. There will be Supertunia baskets, Fuchsia, Geraniums, Millionbells/Calibrachoa, and Dragon Wing Begonia for sale.

Pre-orders are being taken ahead of time by calling or texting LuAnn Bolatto at 815-790-7134. The number of baskets and color choices will be needed when you contact her. These baskets may be used as regular pots of flowers too.

Fossil Ridge Library News

Adult Programs

Wednesday, April 2- Medicare and Social Security, 6-7:30 p.m. Let us help you put the pieces together regarding understanding and navigating Social Security and Medicare. Learn vital information you need to know about time frames, penalties, benefits, and so much more.

Monday, April 7- Tai Chi 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 With guidance from Erica Bough of Breathe Life Tai Chi, use the ancient arts of Tai Chi and Qi Gong to optimize your breathing and enhance your ability to stretch, balance, and decrease anxiety to lead a more relaxing life.

Tuesday, April 8- Well Read book club 1-2 p.m. Dive into thought-provoking reads and engaging discussions with the Well-Read Book Club. We'll explore books that challenge your perspectives each month and ignite meaningful conversations. Join us and connect with fellow book lovers. -April's Title: The Appeal by Janice Hallett.

Wednesday, April 9- Singer Songwriter concert with Dave Rudolf. 6-7:30 p.m. Join Grammy-nominated Gold Record Artist Dave Rudolf for a night of Cat Stevens, Paul Simon, and a few other singer-songwriters. Hear some of your favorite tunes from the 60s and 70s premiere songwriters!

Children Programs
Wednesday, April 2, 9, 16 -Lap-Sit, 10-10:30 a.m. Let's instill a love of books in children from birth to three years old. This program is designed to introduce your child to the wonderful world of books. Caregiver participation and guidance are required as we read, sing, and do finger plays.

Thursday, April 3- My Parent and Me Canvas Painting, 2 p.m., 3:30 p.m., 5 p.m. 6:30 p.m. Designed for you and your child to have some creative fun while enjoying a special day

together. Each participant will paint corresponding paintings. Registration and payment of \$10 per pair are required. Ages 6 and up are recommended. Two sessions will be available, and the same picture will be painted at both sessions-20 pairs per session.

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

Thursday, April 3, 10, 17, 24-Toddler Time, 10-11 a.m. We welcome toddlers and their caregivers to join us weekly to explore various toys and sensory materials. Toddlers can enhance their gross and fine motor skills, social interaction, and language skills. Caregivers must accompany their little ones throughout the program.

Thursdays, April 3, 10, 15-5:30-6:30 p.m. Listen and Create Storytime, This program is specially designed

for children aged 3-5. Children can explore new books every week and engage in a fun craft project. Please make sure to dress in clothes that can get messy, as the craft project will involve getting creative with various art materials.

Wednesday, April 9- Half Day Movie Matinee: Hit Pig 1:30- 3:30 p.m. Join us for a family movie afternoon; bring your own refreshments or enjoy light snacks. Registration is recommended.

Tuesdays, April 15, 29- Play-Doh Playdates, 10:30-11 a.m. Join us for a Play-Doh workshop. Display your creativity using our Play-Doh and tools. This program is for children aged 2-6.

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



Courtesy photo

RCMS STUDENTS of the month for March are (front, from left) Salina Gnutek (7th grade), Lilly Johnson (7th), Maxx Hayducak (6th), Cayden Leon (6th) and Jacob Juricic (7th). Back row: Matthew Tibble (6th), William Kunde (8th), Nate Leon (8th) and Ella Frieders (8th). Not pictured: Kaite Kersmarki (6th), Kevin Earls (7th), Heidi Budick (8th) and Allizon Aguirre Perez (6th).



Courtesy photo

CONGRATULATIONS TO the Reed-Custer Middle School ACE winners for the month of March. From left are: Halas Janousek (7th), Kristopher Couch (7th), Addison Peters (8th), Paisley Wilson (6th) and Elena Pivonka (6th).



CONGRATULATIONS TO Addison Kinkin (Criminal Justice), a junior at Reed-Custer High School, on winning the March GAVC Director Award for her program. One of the highest honors recognized at the Grundy Area Vocational Center is the Director Award. Every month throughout the school year, instructors have the opportunity to recognize one exceptional student. Both first year and second year students are eligible. Criteria for this selection include Attendance, Citizenship, Leadership Skills, Professional Attitude, Ability in Practicum Activities, Skills, and Classroom Assignments and Teamwork.

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It's the incompetence

BRAIDWOOD—Remember how Trump claimed that government workers should be hired on the basis of merit? Apparently talk is cheap with Trump because our war pilots could have been shot down due to the incompetence of government big shots from the President on down during a recent attack on Yemen. Does Trump care? No, and all the rest of those involved in the operation are denying, pointing fingers and spinning, spinning, spinning. As Commander-in-Chief, the buck stops at the President's door but he's taking no responsibility. As Trump slashes jobs and illegally cuts the benefits of Americans throughout the country, it should be likewise for Trump and his Cabinet. They must face legal investigation and firings are in order. Furthermore, Trump needs to eat his words. He claimed that federal workers hired under DEI diversity are incompetent when in fact Trump and his Cabinet have revealed themselves to be the incompetent ones.

Thanks to Trump

SHADOW LAKES—Here is a question for all you Trump supporters. If Trump would've told you that once he was elected, he was gonna put the richest man in the world in charge of the United States government would you still have voted for him? Gas prices are going back up again. Inflation still going up. Food prices are still going up. Stock markets in the gutter. Every country in the world hates the United States. Welcome to Trump's golden age.

Years before payback

BRAIDWOOD—So after finally seeing the agreement between the city and the car dealerships. The city will buy the property for \$1.8 million and give it to the dealerships with no mention of any type of repayment to the city. The city will reimburse the developer \$4,765,000 from TIF 3 when the development is complete. The city will reimburse the developer 100% of the real estate taxes for 10 years. The city will also reimburse the developer 55% of the municipal sales tax for 10 years. Wilmington currently receives \$150,000 per year in sales tax from each dealer for a total of \$300,000. So that leaves the city with \$135,000 and we still have to pay off the loan of \$1.8 million at \$14,000 per month times 12 months is \$168,000 a year. The city bought 68 acres and the car dealerships are using 20 acres to build on but we gave them all of the property.

Sickle and hammer

WILMINGTON—It disgusts me seeing Trump, Speaker Johnson and other Republican lawmakers wearing stars and stripes pins on their suit lapels. A more accurate pin would be a pin showing a sickle and hammer.

Paranoia

WILMINGTON—I have to agree with the sound off with people on Trump and Musk. Last night when I went to bed I heard them in my closet talking about taking my social security and deporting me. I found a mike in my car so they could lis-

ten to me. My wife said it's the kids toy but I know better.

Turn back the clock

WILMINGTON—Is it possible to turn back the clock 5 months and vote in the election knowing what we know now? We would have known that our democracy would become a kleptocracy supported by an oligarchy within an atmosphere of chaos all the while violating the Constitution on a daily basis. The oligarchs have become ransackers engaged in the scorched earth plundering of our nation while Republicans stand by adding to the mayhem. How could voters be so naive, so stupid as to believe a cult leader? Those voters deserve to suffer the higher prices and lost benefits that we must now live with unless we get rid of that blunderbus of a bully. But the rest of us have known the ugliness of Trump all along. And now we've just seen the grilling of the latest nominee for Commissioner of Social Security who is a Wall Street crony that can hardly form words to answer questions and undeniably unqualified like most of Trump's administration. Our nation is bruised, bloody and barely functioning. If we could go back in time to election day, the outcome would be very different. Irene

Ugliest election ever

BRAIDWOOD—By the time most people read this, the polls will have closed and the election results will be known. When daylight comes the following day, the political corrugated board signs which have littered our community will have begun to disappear. But our community remains in political ruins from the ugliest and worst election in Braidwood history, at least so far. The constant crossfire of lies, accusations, finger pointing, name calling and so-called truths which hold no truths, have done so much damage to the spirit of our community that it will take several months, if not years to recover. All candidates for local office and their political cheerleaders should be absolutely ashamed of themselves. Absolutely nobody has told the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So when the winners of this battle stand up on April 22nd to take their oaths of office, hopefully their conscience will take hold and remind them of just how dirty their campaigns really were. Even if they themselves were not firing the political canons, their cheerleaders who were lighting the fuses could have been controlled. The worst part of all of this is the fact that we, the residents of Braidwood, get to experience this all over again starting in November of 2026 when all 5 of our city's so-called leaders will be up for election the following April.

No tax cuts

BRAIDWOOD—Why do billionaires need a \$4.5 trillion tax cut? They don't. And eliminating the tax cut could balance the budget or decrease the national debt. Trump added \$8 trillion to the national debt during his first presidency which was the most of any president in history and mainly due to \$1.9 trillion tax cuts for the wealthy. And the much larger tax cut this



time round is the reason for the outrageous slashing and burning of the government including veterans' funding. Veterans are real men who spilled their blood unlike Trump who refused to serve and his daddy pulled strings five times to keep his son home to party in the nightclubs. It's something Trump joked about years later on a radio talk show. Trump is bringing pain upon our people by embarrassing us throughout the world with the recent SignalGate scandal and destroying the proud reputation of our nation, the most respected of the modern age. It's ironic but it was predicted in 2016 by the co-author of Trump's book, The Art of the Deal, that Trump as president would destroy western civilization as we know it. Tragically it really seems to be happening

What a mess

DIAMOND—As I watched the news today I heard that the stock market dropped, stagflation is coming and recession is possible due to Trump's erratic policies. Furthermore, VP Vance is telling us that the acquisition of Greenland is considered absolutely essential to our security despite Greenland's refusal to accept Vance's visit. As you might expect, Vance had the umbrage to visit Greenland anyway. So our economy is down sliding, our government services are chopped apart, we are too incompetent to conduct a secure military operation and we are adopting a colonial imperialist agenda by forcing Greenland and Canada to join us against their will. Words cannot express my fury at these developments since Trump took office two months ago. The days of Biden's presidency were ones of tranquility with legislation that made our lives better now and for the future and for our children's futures. It's frightening now to just get out of bed in the morning.

The real reason

WILMINGTON—I think the real rea-

son Trump is deporting these alleged foreign born rapists is because they are taking jobs away from American born rapist like Donald Trump.

Doing it legally

DIAMOND—Let's talk about the white South Africans wanting to come to America that another submitter is so disgusted with. They are dealing with the American Embassy in that country and not just walking into our country and demanding their rights. My wife migrated from another country and she dealt with the American Embassy in her country of origin. Our embassy will do stringent background checks on anyone applying to come here to hopefully ensure they will be productive in our society and not be causing harm to Americans when they arrive. After they are cleared there is one more step. They will be required to get mandatory vaccines before being allowed here. By the way, my wife is not "white", she is Asian.

Breaking a rule

SHADOW LAKES—One of the rules in Shadow Lakes is you cannot operate a business out of your home. Yet someone cuts hair out of her home and she was just elected to the board of directors as I understand. This is illegal. I hope Shadow Lakes residents read this and does something about it because she should not be on the POAC or The Board of Directors, because many board of directors and POAC members know she operates a hair cutting business out of her home.

He set the tone

WILMINGTON—Republicans are demanding Texas Representative Jasmine Crockett apologize to Texas Governor Abbott. But they were silent when Trump mocked Michael J. Fox and that disabled reporter. So we all play by Trump rules now. He set the tone.

Commentary

Illinois vastly underestimated costs of immigrant health benefits

BY JASON BUNTING

The state of Illinois has spent over \$1.6 billion in taxpayer money on health benefits for undocumented immigrants over the past five years, according to an audit of the programs conducted by the Illinois Auditor General.

The Pritzker administration created the Health Benefits for Immigrant Seniors (HBIS) and Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults (HBIA) programs to provide tax-

payer-funded health benefits to undocumented immigrants, then gradually expanded the programs through last-minute additions to budget bills which were then rushed through the legislature in the closing hours of session. The Auditor General's report revealed that the Governor's office vastly underestimated the costs of the programs.

The HBIS program, for persons over age 65, actually cost 84% more than expected.

The HBIA program for those between

age 55 and 64 ended up costing 282% more than initially projected.

The cost of the HBIA program for those between the ages of 42 and 54 was 286% higher.

Altogether, these programs cost Illinois taxpayers \$1.6 billion between fiscal years 2021 and 2024. The cost for The current fiscal year (which was not included in the audit) is estimated to be \$629 million, but the cost overruns of the last four years cast some doubt on the accuracy of that figure. If it were accurate, it

would extend the cost of the programs to \$2.2 billion.

In his budget address a couple of weeks ago the Governor proposed ending the HBIA program, while continuing the HBIS program for seniors.

I am a co-sponsor of House Bill 1456, which would end taxpayer funded health benefits for undocumented immigrants.

Jason Bunting is state representative in House District 106 which includes a portion of Grundy and Will Counties
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Nelson's owner ready to enjoy retirement

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

At a baseball field in St. Augustine, FL, Steve Nelson and his wife, Tina Nelson, are enjoying some rare leisure time. Temperatures are in the 80s, and white sandy beaches are a hop and skip away.

Owners of Nelson Furniture, Nelly's, and Old School Brewing, the Nelsons seldom have time to relax, much less travel.

"For business owners, there is no free time," Nelson said. "You're always on call. We're talking 24/7, and it's great to take a break."

In the moments before the game started, Nelson mused on his past. He's 65, but when he speaks of his grandfather, Wayne Nelson, he sounds like a young boy in awe of his amazing grandfather.

"It was the 1940s and my grandfather was buying up everything in sight," Nelson said, chuckling. "He set up the Royal Blue grocery store, and had a Maytag store. Then there was the Sherwin Williams paint store. And he'd haul fuel out to the farmers. The man never stopped, and I pretty much mean that literally."

As a child, Nelson worshipped Grandpa Wayne, whose fast-paced life made Nelson dizzy. He remembers standing in the back room of the family grocery store as a child. When he closes his eyes he can still remember the familiar grocery store smells. He can still see Grandpa Wayne as a younger man, determined to succeed in life.

An impossible pace
Though Nelson's father, Ken Nelson, was also driven, even he acknowledged the impossible pace set by his own father.

"My father would talk about my grandfather's 'unrelenting intensity,'" Nelson said. "It's the way things had always been. We should have been used to it, but even we were amazed at times."

An avid Chicago Cubs fan, Ken Nelson attended Quincy University on a

baseball scholarship. If he ever dreamt of being in the major leagues, he kept his aspirations to himself. As Wayne Nelson's son, he understood he would be expected to one day rule the family's business empire.

Following a brief stint teaching math in Coal City, Ken joined Wayne in running the family businesses.

When the Royal Blue grocery store was edged out of existence during the advent of supermarkets, Wayne Nelson wasted no time shedding sentimental tears. He was far too busy trying to figure out what business might replace the grocery store.

"There was no furniture store in the area," Nelson said. "In 1968, they opened Nelson's Furniture where they sold furniture, paint, carpeting, televisions and appliances."

The furniture store was successful, but the Nelsons were not afraid to make changes, they deemed as necessary. At one point, appliances and electronics were discontinued from the store's inventory due to fierce competition.

Taking care of business
"My father talked to me about going into the family business," Nelson said. "He told me it would be mine one day, but money wasn't guaranteed, and it wouldn't be easy."

Nelson officially hopped on the family business bandwagon in 1982, after earning a degree in business. He had thought about working for the Braidwood Generating Station, with its health insurance, pension, and myriad other benefits, but it was not to be.

With a stiff upper lip, Nelson joined his grandfather and father in taking care of business.

"It was a whirlwind. We were working all the time," Nelson said. "It would sometimes be 24 hours a day. Who are customers going to call after hours? The business owner, of course."

Keeping up the pace
On Sept. 19, 1994, 12 years into Nelson's

"apprenticeship," Wayne Nelson passed away at the age of 79. Father and son grieved, but understood exactly what Wayne would have wanted. And they were up to the challenge.

The pace, already frantic, increased. Fortunately, the Nelsons had loyal help. Two long-time employees, Kevin Webb and Barb Osborn, have worked for the Nelsons nearly 30 years.

"We really count on those two to be the face of the store," Nelson said in 2022. "They don't hover. They greet people who come in the door, try to

direct to what their looking for, and let them explore on their own."

Like Grandpa Wayne, the Nelsons found themselves exploring additional business venues. In 2014, they opened Nelly's, a fast food restaurant featuring Americana selections such as hamburgers, hot dogs, and other sandwiches. In 2019, Old School Brewing, a venue featuring an eclectic selection of beer, wine, and spirits, was introduced.

Good times, bad times
Though the Nelson family has enjoyed success through hard work, there

SEE RETIREMENT PAGE 6

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Steve Nelson, the third-generation owner, is retiring to enjoy more time with his grandkids, fishing, and traveling the world. His journey in the family business began at just 10 years old, handing out flyers door-to-door. By 21, he joined full-time, taking on a variety of roles—from ordering and inventory to store maintenance. Following the passing of his father, Ken, in 2022, Steve stepped into the role of owner. Now, after decades of dedication, he's passing the torch to the next generation.

Scrap-A-Thon coming Saturday

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

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

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

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Service taxes proposed to help bail out mass transit agencies

The Civic Federation, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, the Illinois Economic Policy Institute and the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability recently released a report calling for the expansion of the sales tax to several services, claiming such a move could raise \$2 billion for the state.

The state imposes an additional sales tax in the Regional Transit Authority's jurisdiction. Last week's study found that expanding those specific RTA sales taxes to services could generate an additional \$315 million per year.

There's been a little talk behind the scenes of slightly lowering the 6.25 percent state sales tax if services were also taxed, except possibly in the RTA zone, when a quarter of a percent might also go to transit.

Whatever happens, something important is being overlooked in the coverage so far.

As far back as September, Gov. JB Pritzker has said that local governments within the RTA's coverage area would also have to step up on funding. "Of course, Springfield is going to be a very important part of that. We're not the only funder or the only available partner in that, but certainly we're trying to put together a plan that will make sense for the future," Pritzker said on Sept. 4.

On February 4, Pritzker said, "When we look at the question of mass transit, we've got to consider everything that contributes to that, state government,

county government, city government, as well as the fare box and all those things together are going to help solve the problem."

Two weeks later, Pritzker again mentioned transit fares: "There will be adjustments to the fare box, probably," Pritzker said. And on total costs, he said, "who's covering how much of that is a negotiation that will take place."

The CTA, for example, hasn't increased fares since 2018, and that was the first increase in nine years. Adjusting for inflation, fares should be about \$3 for an L train ride, instead of the \$2.50 they are today.

On March 21st, Pritzker urged negotiators to "come to a conclusion" on transit reforms "soon," and then, he said, "everybody's got to step up on the funding."

Pretty much everyone at the Statehouse has said that funding won't happen without reform. But the transit leaders are still demanding lots more money without interference with their governance.

"It's something that I think we all understand is necessary soon," the governor repeated, emphasizing the word "soon."

But the difficulty in finding a solution to the many problems at the transit agencies was highlight-



Rich Miller

system overtime payments totaled almost \$800 million in a four-year period.

"From 2020 to 2024, Metra, CTA and PACE paid over \$778 million in overtime to employees," Transportation: Regulation, Roads and Bridges Committee Chair Moylan told committee members, according to a story written by Isabel.

But House Assistant Majority Leader Marcus Evans, the sponsor of the labor-backed transit reform bill, pushed back against his fellow Democrat. "We need to move on from the overtime," according to Isabel's reporting.

"That's just a reflection of mismanagement. So quoting large overtime numbers, I think, is disingenuous," Leader Evans (D-Chicago) said.

Rep. Moylan (D-Des Plaines) agreed that managers and supervisors must be held to account for the massive overtime expenditures, Isabel reported.

"We have to hire more people—whatever we have to do to alleviate this," Moylan said. "It's a big con-

cern, and it's going to be a big problem, a logistics nightmare for myself and others."

After the hearing, Isabel reported, Rep. Moylan distributed a document to committee members outlining the highest overtime earners.

According to the document, a CTA Ironworker General Foreperson who earned \$320,000 in 2024 worked 1,666.5 overtime hours. Without overtime, his base salary would've been \$113,000. A Metra Mechanical Relief Foreman logged 2,005 overtime hours, earning \$138,600 in overtime pay. A PACE Master Mechanic worked more than 620 overtime hours, adding \$73,467 to his 2024 salary.

After the committee hearing, Isabel asked Leader Evans to elaborate.

"We need more truth in the story of overtime," he told her. "Most workers in transit don't accrue overtime. People call off a lot in transit in [inclement] weather, so some workers have to stay," Evans said. "It's not these evil workers that are greedy."

Rep. Moylan told Isabel he's not going to call a mass transit bill until there is some solution for overtime costs.

"Soon" is a relevant term.

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

Retirement, continued from page 5

have also been the inevitable struggles.

When COVID 19 hit in 2020, Tina Nelson implored Wilmington city council members to adopt a more pro-active and pro-community approach in dealing with the pandemic. COVID 19 restrictions and mask mandates were killing businesses throughout the country. The Nelsons had worked too hard for too many years to fail.

"How do you think those grandfathers and fathers who have passed their businesses down would have survived this craziness?" Tina Nelson asked the council. "Don't you think all the small restaurants and bars in town also deserve to survive?"

Due in part to their determination and fierce dedication to residents--supporting fundraisers and hosting community events--the Nelsons survived the pandemic.

At the helm

When Ken Nelson passed away on Oct. 6, 2022 at the age of 82, Steve looked back on the decades he had dedicated to the family businesses.

With both his grandfather and father gone, he realized he had suddenly morphed into the family patriarch.

"I stopped to think. I've been at it since 1982," Nelson said. "That's a long time."

On days when he's up late with niggling business issues, Nelson feels time slipping away. While he loves the businesses he has nurtured, he also feels the need for some long-awaited freedom.

"We have a nice place on a lake by the mountains," Nelson said. "Maybe it's time to ease up on the expectations. Maybe it's time to enjoy traveling and hiking and things like that."

Fortunately, Nelson's son Ryan and his wife Annie have stepped up to the plate. Ryan is a tradesman, a profession that provides steady pay and benefits such as health insurance and retirement, but also dedicate to the family business.

Most of the onus was therefore on Annie, who appeared to have inherited Grandpa Wayne's energy and drive by osmosis.

With their daughter-in-law at the wheel, the Nelsons feel they can take

time to enjoy adventures they were too busy to pursue in the past.

"Annie is great, she definitely has a knack for business," Nelson said. "I can see myself gradually pulling away, letting my kids take the wheel. I'll probably be in Wilmington more than not, but gradually retire."

At the age of 65, Nelson is teetering on the edge of taking the plunge. All work and no play is not the future he envisions.

He and Tina bought a home on a lake in Seneca, SC, surrounded by mountains and near the open

road. Now, it's simply a matter of cutting ties.

Like his father, Nelson is a baseball fan. He's coached children's teams for decades, and looks forward to continuing to do so as he retires. He wants to travel and hike. He longs to spend time with his grandchildren.

"We pretty much have everything. With the major roads nearby, we can go anywhere," Nelson said. "We're not the types to sit on the deck and watch life pass us by. I plan to stay active because that's what my grandfather taught me."

Wilmington Garden Club to talk about tree plantings

The Wilmington Garden Club will meet at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, April 16, at the Wilmington Park District building, 315 N. Water St.

Special guest will be a Master Gardener from Allied Nursery who will talk about tree plantings and tree care.

The meeting is open to the public and bring a friend.

On May 24 the Garden Club will host its annual perennial exchange on Saturday, May 24, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Wilmington VFW Post 5422, 557 W. Baltimore St.

Bring a plant and take a plant as part of the exchange. Anyone can participate for free.

Like to garden? Then come sit in a Garden Club meeting and bring a friend

Gas prices will peak in April

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have risen 3.8 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.43/g Monday, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Prices in Illinois are 23.8 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 41.7 cents per gallon lower than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has increased 0.9 cents in the last week and stands at \$3.558 per gallon.

Local gas prices reflect the increase. Unlike a month ago, there is nowhere locally you will find gas under \$3/g.

In Wilmington, the cheapest source of gas is Mohsen at \$3.26/g. On the

high end is Shell at \$3.37/g. Gas up in Braidwood with prices at \$3.51/g across the board. In Coal City, expect to pay anywhere from \$3.19/g at Shell to \$3.49/g at Gas N Wash.

In Morris, you'll pay anywhere from \$3.29/g at Citgo to \$3.39/g at BP. Bourbonnais gas, which is usually slightly cheaper overall, will run \$3.25/g to \$3.29/g.

"We've seen the national average inch up for the second straight week, but with renewed refinery issues on the West Coast, gas prices there are likely to jump 10-35 cents per gallon over the next couple weeks," said Patrick De Haan, head of petrole-

um analysis at GasBuddy.

"As we head into April, Americans should expect gas prices to rise, with a peak that could occur in mid-to-late April. While average prices remain below last year's levels, we'll likely begin to catch up, with prices expected to increase in most—if not all—states over the next few weeks. Continued uncertainty around whether tariffs will be implemented on April 2 could also impact pump prices, setting the stage for a volatile period for American drivers."

The lowest price in the state Monday was \$2.95/g while the highest was \$4.59/g.

M-E Quilt Group to hold annual resale

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

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

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

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

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Preparing the next generation of 4Hers

You may not know much about the Will County 4-H Youth Foundation, but it's been around 52 years.

It was started in 1973 as a means of offering financial support to 4-Hers through many fundraising events such as; the 1986 Valentine Dance at the Atrium in Peotone, the 1995 Cow Pie Bingo at Francis 4-H Field, the 2000 raffle of a fiberglass cow at the Will County Fair, years of raffling gift baskets and 13 years of spaghetti and pork chop dinners.

Thousands of dollars have been raised by volunteers to benefit the youth of Will County. Volunteers want to see the next generation succeed without having to consider how much those costs might impact their family.

The Foundation provides the resources needed for the educational programs developed for youth and adults, including both 4-H and Master Gardeners.

Master Gardeners programs involve people improving their quality of life by helping them discover sound management practices for home and urban natural resources.



GETTING THEM OUTDOORS—4-H projects supported by the Foundation involve youngsters ages 5 to 18, including fishing at a local pond.

They create aesthetically pleasing environments while promoting well-being through people-plant interactions and horticultural therapy, and by contributing to a safe, abundant food supply through home fruit and vegetable production.

These programs are accessible to the general public and are also offered in local schools. From the beginning we have valued our county's history, agricultural roots, education, youth, and community networks.

The Will County 4-H Youth Foundation is a registered 501(C)(3) non-profit whose mission is to provide financial support directly to families and to the University of Illinois-Will County Extension.

4-H programs allow

youth between the ages 5-18 to learn by doing while also giving them chances to serve their communities through various service opportunities. In 4-H the whole family takes part including siblings of all ages learning and growing together.

Today, the Foundation wants to blend traditional with modern by taking into account the expanding interests and talents of our community. From Ag Business, livestock rearing and crop science to robots, e-sports and graphic design, it is helping without removing our roots.

It wants to be there for kids: Our older generation teaching the next. This is where you come in.

The biggest challenge is not being able to raise enough money each year to fully fund every request. Though no one has been completely turned down, the Foundation has not been able to fully support every 4-H kid or local citizen's expenses to attend learning opportunities.

Recent requests include: Payment of tuition fees for the Junior Livestock Conference, Junior Leadership Conference, Illini Academy Camp at University of Illinois, the robotics program including purchase of expensive equipment, and partial funding for the e-sport tournament held this past fall.

To increase giving potential, the Foundation is asking for your help. Any and all tax deductible donations would be appreciated.

For donations of \$50 or more, your name will be placed in a gift drawing for one round trip plane ticket on Southwest Airlines.

For contributing businesses, contributions to the Foundation reaches to a broad audience across one of the Illinois' largest counties. Businesses or organizations will be placed in front of over 10,000 visitors at the Will County Fair in August, over 200 4-H fami-

lies at the Will County 4-H General Project Show, and various community events and festivals across Will County.

Sponsors are also highlighted on the Foundation website and Facebook page. To complete a sponsorship packet visit <http://www.willco4hfoundation.com>.

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TEAMWORK—Support by the Will County 4-H Foundation helps 4-Hers participate in projects that build teamwork.



CHAMBER AMBASSADOR Wendy Hill (left) presents the Employee of the Month Trophy to Jen Markle of Whitmore Ace Hardware. Markle was nominated by a happy customer stating, "She knew where everything was, saved me many steps, and got me out of the store and home to finish my projects in no time at all. That day Whitmore's was a winner because Jen was a great ambassador for the store." The traveling trophy is awarded each month to an employee from a Wilmington business who deserves recognition for kindness, expertise or helpfulness. To nominate someone contact the chamber through Facebook or its web page.



Left to right: Samantha Olson, Kelly Olson, Dr. Garrett B. Smith, Grace Smith, Sherry Yakima, Dayna Vargocko. Not pictured: Alea Vargocko and Sara Daniels

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OBITUARIES

Judith Bedford

SPARTA, IL— Judith “Judy” Bedford, 78, of Sparta, IL passed away March 25, 2025 in Sparta.

Judy was born May 15, 1946 in Zeigler, IL the daughter of Harlen Bonner and Lois (Williams) Blount.

Judy was a real estate agent with Onorato real Estate Agency in Coal City. She loved fishing with her grandchildren and was the proud owner of the Majestic Fishing and Hunting Club. Judy was a fantastic cook and enjoyed driving in her convertible with her stuffed rabbit, Peter. Although she was never a cat person, Judy loved her adopted rescue cat, Tigger.

Survivors include her four children: Raymond (Melissa) Biskie of Sparta; Phyllis Rhodes of Sparta; Donald (Laura) Bedford of Waterloo, IL; Mary Ann Johnson of Ashley, IL; one granddaughter Ashley

(Michael) Schanks; seven grandsons: Bradley Biskie, Andrew Biskie, Patrick (Alex Birs) Melby, Jeffery Biskie, Ryan (Devin Timothy-Rhodes) Rhodes, Austin Bedford, Nicholas Bedford; eight great-grandchildren: Logan Schanks, Landon Schanks, Summer Biskie, Skylar Biskie, Braylee Biskie, Jonzy Biskie, Hayden Melby and Holly Melby.

Judy was preceded in death by her parents; beloved husband on March 25, 2016, Donald Bedford, M.D., who she married on Feb. 14, 1986.

It was her wish to be cremated and a celebration of life will be held at a later date.

Memorial contributions may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital or Shriner's Hospital of St. Louis, MO.



Doris Nicol

WILMINGTON— Doris Nicol, 96 of Wilmington, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at Miller Rehabilitation Center in Kankakee.

Born July 16, 1928, in Morrisonville, IL, Doris Evelyn was the daughter of Alva Clyde and Helen Grace (Sloman) Lamb. She was raised in Morrisonville, where she graduated from Morrisonville High School with the Class of 1946. On June 14, 1947, Doris married the love of her life, John A. “Jack” Nicol, in Bloomington, IL. Their early years together took them to Bloomington while Jack attended college, and later to Chicago, California, and Baltimore during his military service. Following Jack's honorable discharge, they returned to Morrisonville before settling in Wilmington in the mid-1950s, where they built a life and raised their family.

Doris began her career at State Farm Insurance in Bloomington before dedicating herself to her home and family. Later, she worked for Dr. Razma's office in Wilmington during the summer months, assisting with record keeping. She ultimately retired from Wilmington High School after 26 years of service.

A woman of faith, Doris was an active member of St. Rose Catholic Church in Wilmington and was involved with the St. Rose School PTO when her children were young. She loved playing cards and cherished her Friday night card club. Bowling, bingo, and her involvement with the Will-Grundy Senior Citizens also brought her great joy. In later years, Wednesday nights became a cherished tradition of pizza and cards with family and friends, and she and Jack could often be found dining at the Chick-a-Dee, a favorite local spot.

Doris and Jack were inseparable throughout their 75 years of marriage, always by each other's side. His passing on November 14, 2022, left a void, but her love for family remained steadfast. She will be

remembered as a devoted wife, a loving mother and grandmother, and a cherished “Gi-Gi”.

Survivors include: two daughters: Sandra (Mark) Mahalik and Barbara (Doug) Rink; five grandchildren: John Welsh, David (Kelli) Welsh, Kate Welsh, Calvin (Jessica) Rink, and Jordan (Adam) Granger; nine great grandchildren: Luke and Cole Welsh, Ryder, Myles, and Vylene Rink, Jett and Brynlee Granger and Nolan and Eli Stevens; and many nieces and nephews.

Doris was preceded in death by her parents: Alva and Helen Lamb; husband, Jack; son-in-law, Tom Welsh in 2014; siblings: Dwight (Sarajane) Lamb and Joseph (Karen); brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: Loren (Betty) Nicol, Harold (Rita) Nicol, William (Sue) Nicol, and Mary Louise (Bud) Miller.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 East Kahler Road in Wilmington on Wednesday, April 2, 2025 between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Funeral services will follow Thursday, April 3, 2025 at 10:30 a.m. in St. Rose Catholic Church, 604 S. Kankakee Street in Wilmington, where a Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated with Reverend Sebastian Gargol officiating.

Burial will be in Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, where she will be laid to rest with Jack.

Preferred memorials may be as gifts in Doris' memory to Kuzma Care Cottage, 635 S. Main Street, Wilmington, IL 60481.

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

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



Clarence Kinkin, Jr.

WILMINGTON— Clarence Kinkin, Jr. “Butch” “King Kong”, 76, of Wilmington, passed away on Wednesday, March 26, 2025 at Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee. Born on Nov. 11, 1948 to Clarence and Doris (nee Cook) Kinkin, Sr. On April 18, 1970 he married Margie Alldread in Braidwood and together they made their home and raised their family on Essex Road in Wilmington. He began his career at Celfibe which became Celetrex in Wilmington and was then employed by Vandenberg Foods. In 2015 he ended his career and retired from Wilmington School District where he had been employed as a janitor. During his time at the school, he really enjoyed the students and even after retirement loved going to the Wilmington High School football games. He enjoyed deer hunting and was a NASCAR and Chicago Bears fan. A big car guy, he was proud of his 1972 Lemans and enjoyed driving his 1995 Chevy S10. He also enjoyed restoring old

Cub Cadet lawnmowers.

Surviving are his wife, Margie Kinkin; sons: Jason Kinkin, Patrick Kinkin, Tracy (Amy) Kinkin and Dennis Michael Rosas all of Wilmington; grandchildren: Kyle Kinkin, Addison Kinkin and Kaitlyn Cowie; great-granddaughter, Palmer; and sister, Clare (Albert) Flynn of Isabella, MO.

Preceding him in death were his parents, Clarence and Doris Kinkin, Sr; and brother, Darrell Kinkin.

Cremation rites have been accorded. Memorial visitation will be held on Sunday, April 6, 2025 beginning at 2 pm at their home on Essex Road in Wilmington.

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

R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory, 401 E. Main St., Braidwood is entrusted with arrangements.

Bruce Egeland

MORRIS—Bruce E. Egeland, 73, of Morris, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, March 26, 2025, at Lightways Hospice Home in Joliet.

Born on July 18, 1951, in Morris, Bruce Eugene was the son of Roy and Ardelle (Johnson) Egeland. He was raised in Morris and graduated from Morris High School with the Class of 1969. On June 30, 1973, he married the love of his life, Debra Ziegenfuss, and together they built a home filled with love and cherished memories.

A hardworking and skilled craftsman, Bruce owned and operated Bruce Egeland Construction for over 30 years, earning a reputation for his dedication, integrity, and craftsmanship. Beyond his career, he was a devoted member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, where he served faithfully as a Deacon.

Bruce will be remembered as a kind-hearted and generous man who never hesitated to lend a helping hand. He had a warm, easygoing nature and a gift for making others laugh. An animal lover at heart, Bruce especially cherished his dogs and found joy in horseback riding. Nothing gave him greater joy however than family.

His legacy of love, generosity, and hard work will live on in the hearts of those who knew and loved him.

Survivors include his sons: Eric (Jennifer) Egeland of Long Grove, IL and

Jason (Shannon) Egeland of Minooka, IL; five grandchildren: Eliana and Anabelle, Bryce, Brie and Ryan; one sister, Kay (Craig) Matteson of Morris and three sisters-in-law: Kathie Egeland of Crystal Lake, IL, Paula (David) Kunzmann of East Moline, IL and Tina Sisteck of Morris, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Bruce was preceded in death by his parents; wife Debra (2014) and three brothers: Kevin, Craig and Brent in childhood.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 202 W. Jefferson Street in Morris on Monday, March 31, 2025 from 12:00 noon until time of funeral service 2:00 p.m. Pastor Patrick Lohse will officiate, and burial will follow in Saratoga Cemetery, Morris where Bruce will be laid to rest with his wife, Debra.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be made as gifts in Bruce's memory to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 202 W. Jefferson Street, Morris, IL 60450.

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

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



Dennis Finch

VERONA— Dennis R. Finch, 77, a lifelong resident of Verona, IL, passed away peacefully at his home on March 21, 2025.

Born March 1, 1948, in Morris, Dennis Russell was the son of Russell and Elsie (Mehock) Finch. He was raised in Verona and graduated from MVK High School with the Class of 1966. With a keen interest in business and accounting, he pursued further education, which led him to establish and operate Finch Tax & Accounting, serving his clients with dedication for many decades.

On April 27, 1968, Dennis married Margaret “Peg” Dolan. Together, they briefly lived in Morris before moving to Mazon and ultimately settling back in Verona. Over the years, Dennis worked at the Morris Paper Mill and Johnson & Johnson Personal Products in Wilmington. He was also a proud member of IBEW Local #176 who was initiated in 1998, working as a union electrician until his retirement in 2013 - all while continuing his tax and accounting business. In addition, he previously owned and operated Prep Sports Weekly, a local publication in Mazon that celebrated and highlighted area sports—a testament to his passion for community and athletics.

Dennis was elected in 2019, and took great pride in serving as the mayor of Verona, dedicating himself to the village he loved. His leadership and commitment were evident in his efforts to support and improve his hometown. He was also a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Kinsman, where he once taught CCD; was a Mazon-Verona-Kinsman ambulance squad member, and served as their secretary-treasurer for several years, and held a membership in the National Directory of Registered Tax Return Preparers and Professionals.

One who had a deep appreciation for antiques and antique cars, Dennis took great pride in his classic Mustang. In addition, he loved to travel, often embarking on RV adventures with Peg and the family, and a once in a lifetime trip to Africa.

Above all, Dennis was a devoted family man. He never hesitated to go the extra mile for those he loved. Whether coaching his children's teams or staying actively involved in the lives of his grandchildren, his presence was constant and unwavering. His loyal canine companion, Rosie, was always by his side, a reflection of his

kind and caring nature.

Dennis will be remembered for his generosity, dedication, and the love he had for his family, friends, and the community he cherished. His legacy lives on in the countless lives he touched.

Survivors include his wife of 57 years, Margaret “Peg” Finch; children: Shawna (Don) McCowan of Wentzville, MO; Stacia Finch of Verona; Shelley (Tony) Cryder of Seneca, IL; Scott (Laura) Finch of Diamond; and Shane Finch of Mazon; grandchildren: Justin Cryder (fiancee-Brittany Banaszak) of Seneca; Mackenzie Cryder of Tennessee; Gage Cryder of Seneca; Austin McCowan of Wentzville; and Zachary Finch, Mae Finch and Brock Finch, all of Diamond; two sisters: Shirley (Terry) Misener of Verona and Janice (Dave) Muffler of Mazon; his brother, Rodney (Connie) Finch of Morris.

Dennis was preceded in death by his parents; brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Tom and Cheri Dolan; and nephew, Todd Dolan.

Green flameless cremation rites have been accorded.

The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation at Fruland Funeral Home 121 W. Jefferson Street in Morris on Saturday, April 5, 2025 from 10:00 a.m. until time of memorial service 12:00 p.m.

Inurnment will follow in Mount Carmel Cemetery in Morris, where Dennis will be laid to rest in the Dolan family lot.

The family wishes to extend their heartfelt appreciation to the Riverside Medical Team and Cancer Institute Staff, who provided outstanding care to Dennis throughout his illness. The exceptional in-home care delivery by PurposeCare and the compassionate support and services provided by Uplifted and Palliative Care were also deeply appreciated and will never be forgotten.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Dennis' memory to Just Animals Shelter in Mazon or to the family for a future project for the betterment of the Village of Verona.

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

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

Doug Macdonald

MORRIS—Doug Macdonald, 74, of Morris, passed away unexpectedly on Sunday, March 30, 2025 at his home.

Born Nov. 21, 1950 in Morris, Douglas Paul was a son of Robert and Natalie (Eckland) Macdonald. He was raised and educated in Morris, graduated from Morris Community High School with the class of 1968, and attended Eastern Illinois University. On June 9, 1973 Doug married Elizabeth “Betty” Mason in Libertyville, IL. Together they would establish their family and make their home in Morris.

Doug worked for many years as an insurance agent and mortgage broker in the Northwest Suburbs of Chicago. He then transitioned to working as a correctional officer for the Grundy County Sheriff's office for several years before retiring. Doug was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Morris, past member of the Lions Club and Kiwanis, and a proud Eagle Scout. He was an avid collector of all things, but especially baseball cards and stamps. Doug also would stay up to date with current events, closely following the stock market, and took great pleasure in reading and playing the Lotto.

Above all else, he was a devoted family man. Doug was a proud husband and father, and cherished his role as “Poppie” to his beloved grandchildren.

Survivors include his wife of 51 years, Betty Macdonald and two sons, Ryan

(Angela) Macdonald and Alec (Mikki) Macdonald, all of Morris; six grandchildren: Hayden, Landon, Griffin, Harper, Lilly and Theo; one brother, Scott (Bonnie) Macdonald, of Kingsport, TN; two brothers-in-law, Steve (Wanda) Mason, of Moses Lake, WA and Larry (Judy) Mason, of Virginia; one sister-in-law, Betty Bridges, of Sommersworth, NH and several nieces.

Doug was preceded in death by his parents, his mother and father-in-law, Mary Agnes and Vernon Mason and one brother, John Macdonald.

Per Doug's wishes, cremation rites are being accorded.

The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation at Fruland Funeral Home, 121 W. Jefferson St. in Morris on Sunday, April 6, 2025 from 1 p.m. until the time of memorial service at 4 p.m.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Doug's memory to We Care of Grundy County, 530 Bedford Road, Morris, IL 60450.

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

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



With gas tax revenues sliding, Illinois weighs road mileage tax

BY GLENN MINNIS
THE CENTER SQUARE

With gas tax revenues on the decline as more and more vehicles require less gas, Illinois state Sen. Ram Villivalam, D-Chicago, is proposing tweaks that would essentially replace the current gas tax structure with a tax by mile system.

Engineers Local 150 Executive Director Marc Poulos sees “road usage charge” legislation as a logical solution.

“The federal government and the state government have motor fuel taxes in place in order to fund highway and bridge construction both in Illinois and in this country and because the federal government continues to pass legislation that increases MPG on vehicles, you have vehicles that pay no motor fuel tax,” Poulos told The Center Square.

“In addition to that,

you have other forms of power for vehicles, mainly electric vehicles. The fairest and most equitable system is a road usage charge and the reason why is because regardless of how you power a vehicle, the road usage charge will charge every vehicle owner by every mile that they actually drive.”

As many as 1,000 motorists would be tabbed to take part in the pilot program under Villivalam's legislation, with all of them required to report their vehicle's fuel efficiency and mileage to the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Drivers who pay more in the gas tax than they would have in mileage would be granted a refund as other elements of the program are still being tested.

As it is, Illinois motorists now pay the second-highest motor fuel tax in the country at 66 cents per gallon.

“People that understand what the road usage charge is, they like it,” Poulos adds. “People that do not understand what it is, don't like it.”

While Illinois would be just one of several states weighing such legislation, not every lawmaker in Springfield is on board with it.

“It's just another tax, another attack on the middle class, which is already struggling to buy health insurance, struggling to pay their bills, including the accelerated price of electricity because of the green energy scam,” state Rep. Chris Miller, R-Oakland, told The Center Square.

“All the things that the Democrats are doing is attacking the middle class, making it harder for working families and I think it's going to continue the exodus out of the state because people are just taxed to death.”

China leading automakers regarding EVs

Dear EarthTalk: Are the Chinese actually way ahead of U.S., European and Japanese automakers regarding EVs? And are we ever going to see Chinese cars on American roads?

- P.L., via email



China has quickly become a dominant force in the global electric vehicle (EV) market, surpassing car makers in the U.S., Europe and Japan. Western car companies used to be the leaders in innovation, but Chinese car makers have surged ahead recently, producing affordable, high-tech EVs at record speed. This has raised concerns in the U.S. about whether Chinese automakers will soon enter the American market and how that could affect domestic car companies. With growing competition and trade tensions, the question

remains: Are Chinese EVs really ahead? And will they ever make it onto American roads?

One of the main factors that brings China's EV success is robust government support. For years, China has offered substantial subsidies, tax incentives and infrastructure investments to enhance EV sales and manufacturing.

China also has control over a large part of the worldwide battery supply chain, which provides its car makers an edge regard to cost and access to crucial components.

Firms such as BYD, Nio and XPeng have emerged as global leaders, providing EVs that are not only less expensive than Western options, but also equipped with advanced technology. These elements enable China to sell its EVs globally, surpassing American and European car makers in both production scale and cost-effectiveness.

Although they've achieved global success, Chinese EVs still face hurdles to enter the U.S. market. High tariffs increase the cost of export, and persistent geopolitical tensions

between the U.S. and China further complicates trade. Concerns also exist about cybersecurity and intellectual property.

As some lawmakers suggest, vehicles made in China may pose a security threat due to their sophisticated data collection and connectivity capabilities. Additionally, American car makers and lawmakers have opposed permitting Chinese competition, worrying it might undermine local EV manufacturing and lead to job reductions.

Because of these barriers, some Chinese carmakers are looking at different ways to enter the market.

One possible strategy is making EVs in Mexico, whereby they'd benefit from the USMCA trade agreement and potentially avoid some tariffs. Others might partner with Western brands to supply batteries or technology, which would let them compete in a more indirect way.

Many American EVs already have Chinese components, so even without full vehicle imports, China still plays a big role in the U.S. industry.

Competition between China and Western automakers is likely to get more intense. U.S. and European governments are giving more subsidies for domestic EV production, trying to close the gap.

But if China keeps expanding fast, it may be really hard for Western automakers to catch up. Whether or not Chinese EVs show up in American dealerships, their influence on the global car industry can't be denied.

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



CHINESE ELECTRIC VEHICLE maker BYD has now surpassed Tesla as the world's largest producers of EVs

Webinar on what to plant this Spring

The Forest Preserve will be hosting a Lunch and Learn - Planting Natives in the Spring on Friday, April 4, at noon to 1 p.m. as a Zoom webinar.

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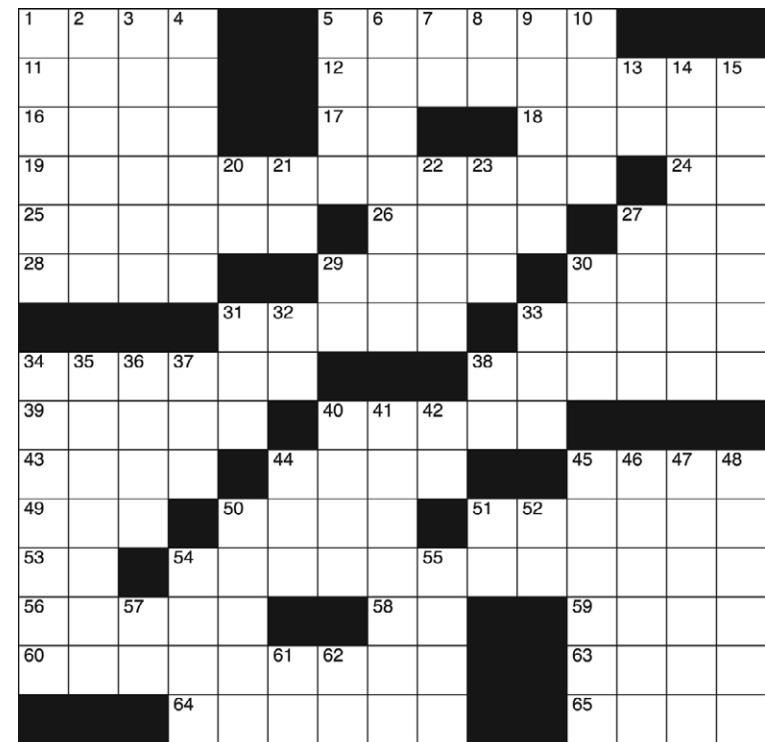
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CLUES ACROSS

- Narrow piece of wood
- African desert
- Waxy covering on birds' beaks
- Sour
- Infrequent
- Former AL MVP Vaughn
- Policemen wear one
- Out of the question
- Used to chop
- Symptoms
- Not moving

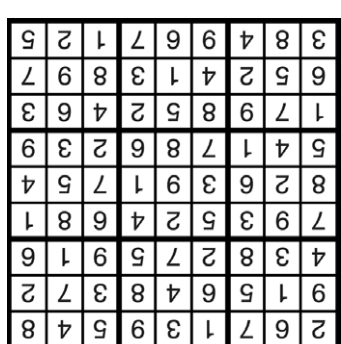
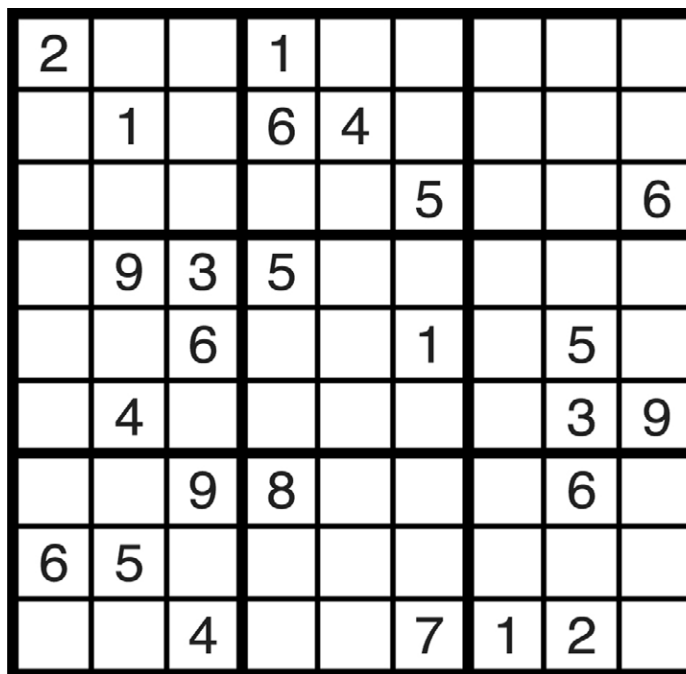
- Folk singer DiFranco
- Comedian Armitage
- Quantitative fact
- Incline from vertical
- Scottish musician
- Rooney and Kate are two
- Positioned
- A very short time
- Tropical American shrubs
- Yemen capital
- Spanish municipality

- Medical professionals
- Fibrous material
- Confined condition (abbr.)
- Without covering
- "Mad Men" honcho Don
- Hockey position
- Taste property
- Fertile spots in a desert
- They precede C
- "Requiem for a Dream" actor Jared
- Try a criminal case
- Liberal rights organization

- Spoke
- Insect repellent

CLUES DOWN

- Unshaven facial hair
- More thin
- Show up
- Seethed
- Ancient Greek city
- Poisonous plant
- Hello
- College sports official
- Monetary unit of Russia
- Wings
- Take too much of a substance
- A citizen of Uganda
- Most appealing
- Atomic #18
- Global investment bank (abbr.)
- Jewish calendar month
- Popular sandwich
- Swiss river
- Incorrect letters
- Popular entree
- Foot (Latin)
- A driver's license is one form
- Extinct flightless bird
- Appetizer
- After battles
- It neutralizes alkalis
- Beverage container
- Partner to "Pa"
- Gray American rail
- Salt of acetic acid
- Canadian province
- Dish made with lentils
- Narrative poem of popular origin
- For each one
- Come to terms
- Test
- More dishonorable
- Unit of loudness
- The Ocean State
- Monetary unit in Mexico
- Lying down
- Thus
- Where LA is located
- Western State



COMET SPORTS

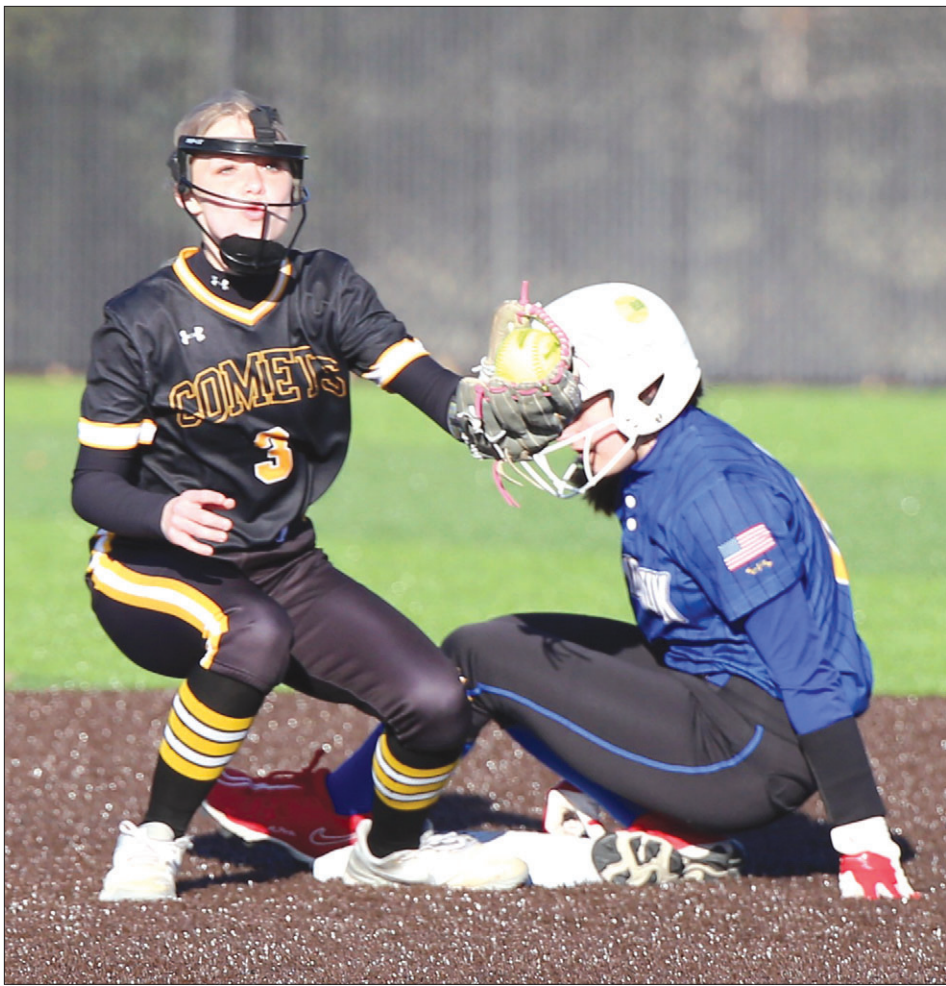


Photo by Miley Morris

OUT AT SECOND! RCHS' Kamryn Wilkey covers second base to get the baserunner out during Monday's game. Wilkey went 3-for-4 at bat with 2 RBIs.

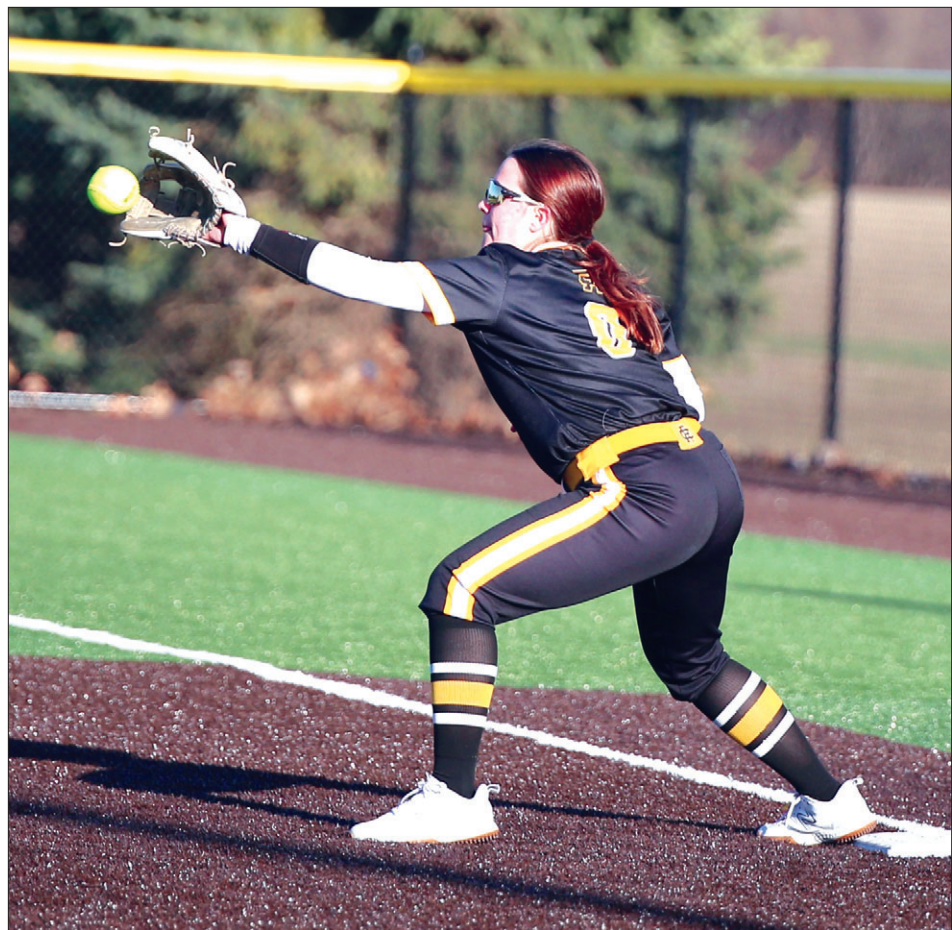


Photo by Miley Morris

RCHS SENIOR Leah Grace steps on the base for an out at first during Monday's game against Somonauk. The Lady Comets won 7-6.

Lady Comets shutout Newark

The Lady Comets shutout Newark on Saturday 10-0 by stringing together seven hits and capitalizing on six errors.

Reed-Custer scored three runs in the second, five in the third and two in the fourth to end it after five innings.

Pitcher Sophia Moyers got the win by holding Newark to just one hit while walking two and striking out seven.

Mackenzie Foote smacked a triple while going 2-for-3 with one RBI. Caysie Esparza had three hits in three trips to the plate with two RBIs. Also getting hits were Kamryn Wilkey and Amber Syc.

**Reed-Custer 1
Beecher 10**

The state-caliber Bobcats have a standout pitcher in Taylor Norkus who struck out 13 Lady Comets on Friday.

Reed-Custer hurt themselves with six errors while managing three hits. Their lone run came in the fourth when they trailed 3-1 but the Bobcats erupted for six

runs in the bottom of the frame to ice the win.

Foote hit a double to score a run. Addison Hartman and Adalyn Steichen had the other two hits.

Moyers suffered the loss in the circle, giving up 11 hits, 10 runs one walk while striking out five.

**Somonouk 6
Reed-Custer 7**

The Lady Comets rallied from a 6-4 deficit in the bottom of the sixth by scoring two runs for the eventual victory.

Hartman and Wilkey paced the Lady Comets by going 3-for-4 each. Moyers, who pitched the win, had a hit and two RBIs. Kirstin Klein, Leah Grace and Steichen also contributed hits. Gracie Robinson walked twice and scored twice.

The Lady Comets travel to Bishop McNamara today (Wednesday), host Sandwich Thursday and Ottawa Friday. On Monday Streator comes to town.

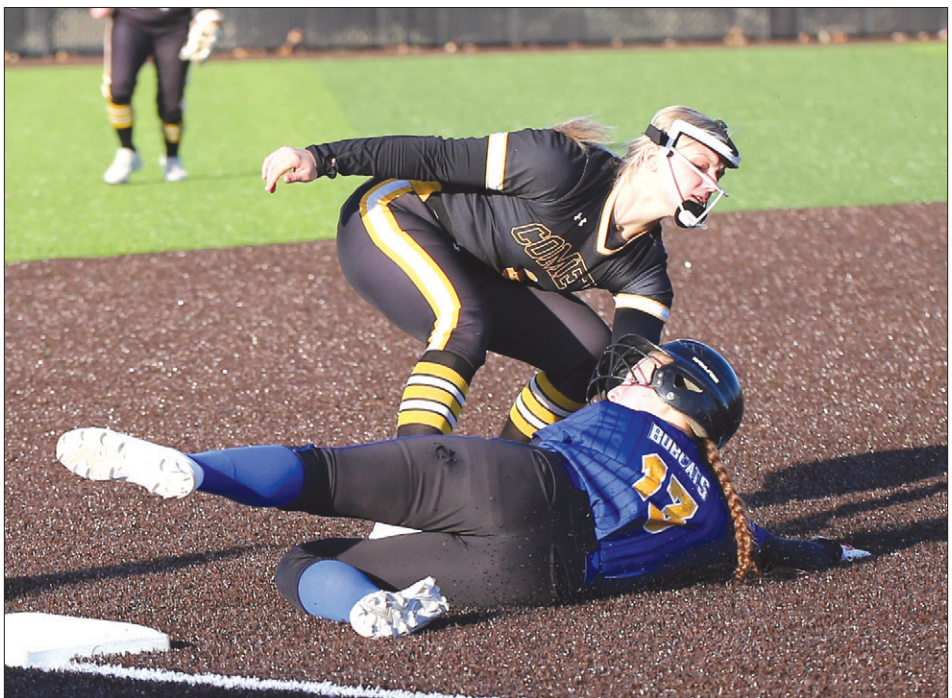


Photo by Miley Morris

LADY COMET Makenzie Foote tags Somonauk opponent out at third during Monday's game. The Lady Comets host Sandwich on Thursday at 4:30 p.m.

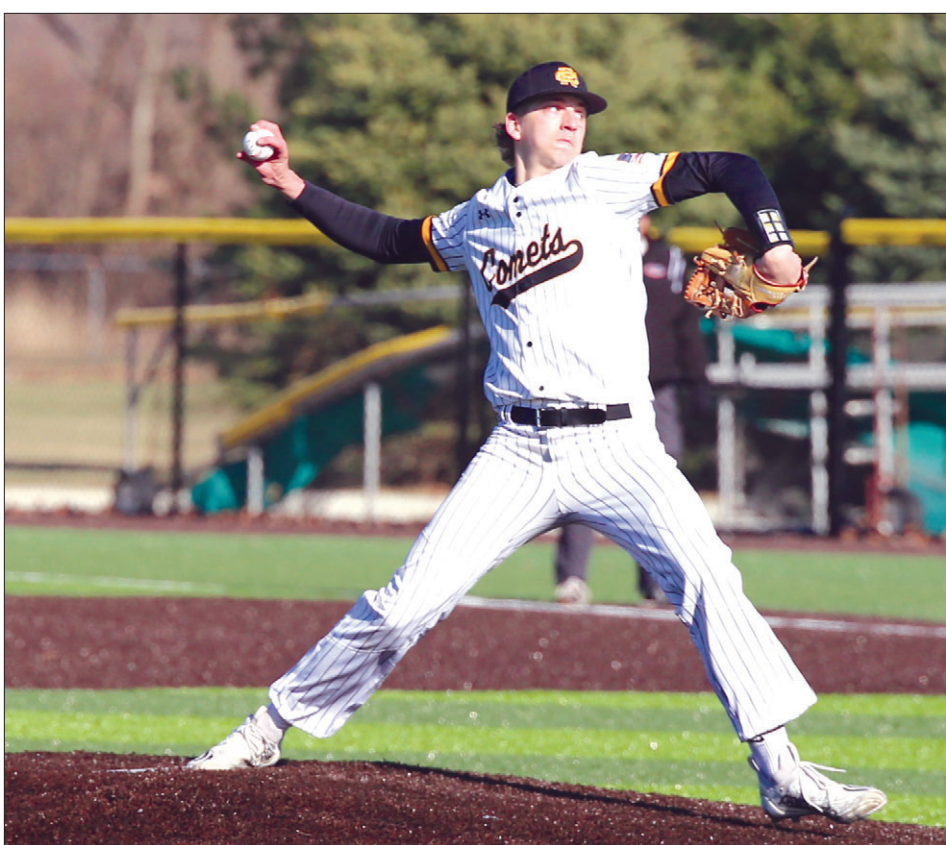


Photo by Miley Morris

COMET JACOB REARDON throws a strike against Gardner-South Wilmington on Monday. Reardon had 11 strikeouts and three walks.

Comets hold off the Wildcats until the end

It was a pitchers' dual Monday when Reed-Custer traveled to Wilmington with the host team winning 1-0 in the bottom of the seventh.

Both teams were strong on the bump with Wildcat Lucas Rink giving up only one hit and no runs through seven innings.

For the Comets, Brady Tyree held the 'Cats to just two hits and no runs through 6 2/3 innings as the game remained scoreless until the bottom on the seventh when, with the bases loaded and two out, Wilmington won it in walk-off fashion when an error allowed the game-winning run.

Rink finished the contest with eight strikeouts while walking one. Tyree, who reached a 104 pitch count, struck out five and walked four.

Zach Ohlund and Declan Moran each collected a hit while the Comets' lone hit was made by Tyree.

Wilmington improved to 3-4 overall while the

Comets fall to 5-2. The ICE conference rivals played each other in Braidwood last night.

Double header

It was a good day for Reed-Custer on Saturday when they defeated Oakwood 7-1 and El Paso-Gridley 8-4.

In game 1 against Oakwood, Matt Kuban earned the win, striking out 3 and allowing 2 hits in 5 shutout innings. Alex Bielfeldt allowed no earned runs and struck out 1 in 2 innings of work. Brady Tyree had a pair of doubles, while Landen Robinson and Kaiden Klein had 2 hits each. Joe Bembenek, Collin Monroe, and Bielfeldt had a hit a piece.

In game 2 against Oakwood, Thomas Emery ended the game with a walk off grand slam in the bottom of the 7th. Emery had a double on the day as well.

Nolan Smith earned the win, striking out 7 and allowing 2 ER in the complete game effort.

Alejandro Fierro had a

pair of doubles, while Landen Robinson added 2 hits as well. Joe Bembenek and Brady Tyree had a hit a piece.

**Gardner S-W 0
Reed-Custer 10**

Pitcher Jacob Reardon threw strikes on Monday when he shut down the visiting Panthers. The senior pitcher struck out 11 batters over five innings while giving up only one hit.

Joe Bembenek finished off Gardner-SW in the sixth inning, not giving up a run nor a hit.

Lansen Robinson smashed a home run while going 2-for-4 with three RBIs. Jeffrey Wolford finished 2-for-3 for two RBIs. Drew Emanuelson doubled in a run. Also hitting the ball were Tyree, Bielfeldt and Smith.

The Comets were aggressive on the base paths with stolen bases for Klein, Monroe, Tyree, Robinson and Bielfeldt.

The Comets host Sandwich Thursday and Streator on Monday.



Photo by Miley Morris

COMET BRADY TYREE slides into second during Monday's game against Gardner-South Wilmington.



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