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WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2026

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Photo by Eric Fisher

THE MASTODON FUEL CENTER at North Division and Coal City Road in Braidwood is about two weeks away from completion. Workers from Omega Sign & Lighting recently installed the Mobil digital sign on the north side of the site. Final touches on the exterior of the building are being completed while the parking lot has been paved.

IDOT keeps Mastodon in prehistoric limbo

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

Dave Smith has a mammoth-sized headache. He can't sleep. On the very worst days, he finds himself close to tears.

Smith, CEO of Ridgeway Petroleum in Lansing, is an experienced gas station developer. The latest jewel in his crown is the Mastodon station nearing completion in Braidwood. Mastodon was scheduled to open for business on June 1, but odds are that will not happen.

The station is currently mired in the tar pits of Illinois Dept. of Transportation (IDOT).

Smith has begged; he's pleaded for the magical permit that will enable him to open the station. All to no avail.

"You wouldn't happen to know someone at IDOT," Smith asks, and he's dead serious.

Smith said the new Mastodon Market, fuel station auto wash was originally aiming for a June 1 opening. Instead, the nearly finished development now finds itself stalled in a bureaucratic holding pattern that has stretched on for almost two years.

"It'll be 23 months that we've been waiting to get a permit from IDOT," Smith said. "We still don't have our permit from IDOT, so we can't open until we get that permit."

Tricky traffic

The location of the fuel stop, Route 113 and Coal City Road, presents a challenge. The intersection is not only offset, making left-hand turns especially tricky. It's also a dangerous intersection, the site of several past vehicular accidents.

To alleviate traffic nightmares, city officials proposed a

traffic light at the intersection. However, that didn't quite work out as planned.

In July 2025, Braidwood city engineer, Sean Kelly, informed the city council that IDOT had denied the request for a stoplight in favor of a four-way stop sign configuration.

Meanwhile, Smith had done his due diligence to widen both Route 113 and Coal City Road, and including right- and left-turn lanes into the station. The improvements were also supposedly being reviewed by IDOT.

Slam dunk

Last February, Braidwood officials announced that IDOT had determined a four-way stop was suddenly out of the question, stating that the intersection would be reevaluated. Three months later, there has been no decisions made, leaving Smith

anxious and frustrated.

The delays have brought what Smith described as "lots of sleepless nights," while motorists driving by the nearly completed site are left wondering when they'll finally get to try the gourmet pizza the station will be offering.

"As soon as we get a permit from IDOT, we'll open," he said. "This whole project is dependent upon IDOT getting a permit completed."

And perhaps the strangest part of all is watching an accomplished CEO - a man who successfully planned, financed and developed nearly a dozen stations is reduced to publicly asking if someone -- anyone -- knows can help him get permission to do business.

"If anybody knows anybody that I can talk to get this done, I would certainly appreciate it,"

Smith said. "I'm open to any recommendations or solutions."

'It's gonna be great'

In short, entrepreneurs may bring money, jobs, and investment to Illinois, but they must first survive the final boss battle: Bureaucratic red tape.

The delay is not only affecting the company, Smith noted, but also the local economy.

"It's revenue for me, and it's revenue for the City of Braidwood and its residents," he said.

Once the permit finally arrives, the Mastodon travel center is expected to offer fuel, food and amenities for truckers and local travelers alike.

"It's gonna be great," Smith said. "I hope so."

Until then, the biggest traffic jam may continue to be somewhere inside some bureaucrat's office.



STATE SENATOR Patrick Joyce was the guest speaker at Monday's Reed Township Memorial Day Program. He reminded attendees that Memorial Day is much more than the unofficial start of summer. He honored veterans who gave everything for their country,



THE REED-CUSTER High School and Middle School bands performed a variety of patriotic numbers including "The Star Spangled Banner" and a medley of U.S. Armed Forces Service songs to honor veterans on May 25 in Braidwood



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Braidwood backs zoning concerns over proposed housing legislation

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

The Braidwood City Council passed a resolution last week officially opposing the proposed Illinois BUILD Act threatens the city's authority in making land use and zoning decisions.

State lawmakers believe the legislation will target a housing shortage but could also limit local control over housing regulations.

The resolution states that local governments are in the best position to regulate issues such as housing density, infrastructure planning, traffic impacts, property values and orderly growth because local officials understand the unique characteristics and needs of their towns.

City officials argue that locally driven zoning policies are not responsible for Illinois' broader housing affordability challenges, warning against additional state restrictions on municipal zoning authority.

Under the measure, the city is urging the Illinois General Assembly and Gov. JB Pritzker to preserve local zoning authority "in its current form without additional restrictions on municipal governments and the communities they serve."

A copy of the resolution will also be forwarded to the Illinois Municipal League.

The action follows recent discussions involving proposed state legislation, including the BUILD Act, which Braidwood City Attorney Bryan Wellner said would significantly reduce the authority municipalities currently have over residential development standards.

"What it's doing is imposing regulations upon municipalities to allow for higher density housing, less restrictions, in terms of setbacks and square footage of the homes..." Wellner said.

He explained the BUILD Act would remove much of the responsibility local governments currently have to regulate housing development and would override existing municipal zoning rules.

"This resolution is basically saying we support municipality authority to regulate housing and regulate their own zoning without the state of Illinois telling us how to do it," Wellner added.

The Illinois Municipal League is actively lobbying against the BUILD Act, and the resolution serves as an official statement showing municipal opposition to the proposal.

Wellner also referenced comments recently made by Sue Rezin regarding the likelihood of the legislation advancing in Springfield.

"I didn't know where this was going to go in Springfield, but I just attended a legislative update the other day in Grundy County," Wellner said. "Sue Rezin was specifically talking about it and she thinks it's very favorable that it's going to pass."

Rezin has publicly suggested that Gov. Pritzker may view housing legislation aimed at reducing homelessness as politically beneficial if he pursues a future presidential campaign.

City leaders indicated the resolution is intended to reinforce the position that decisions involving community growth, lot sizes, setbacks and neighborhood character should remain under local control rather than being mandated at the state level.



DALE FRAHER, SENIOR Vice Commander of American Legion Koca Post 39, presents this year's Legion scholarships to Reed-Custer students, Ethan Morrison (left) and Gwendolyn Stewart.



PROUD TEACHERS stand with Torian Ginger who won the TREP Safety Poster Competition for all of Will County. Art teachers are Ms. Baron, Ms. Watkins and Mrs. Graham.

Torian Ginger wins TREP Safety Poster competition

Reed-Custer High School student Torian Ginger won a safety poster contest, being chosen for having the best design in all of Will County.

Ginger, age 15, was recognized by the District during their Board of Education meeting on Wednesday.

There were a dozen people there to congratulate him including members of the Braidwood Fire Department who inspired him to design fire safety artwork.

Ginger volunteered at the Braidwood Fire Department fulfilling his high school community service hours.

The TREP Safety Poster Competition 2026 is an annual event for middle and high school students in the Will County area. They were encouraged to create artwork focused on school, safety and healthy lifestyles.

Supported by the Three Rivers Manufacturers' Association (TRMA) and local partners like CITGO and AuxSable,

the competition highlighted student safety awareness.

Key aspects of the TREP Safety Poster Competition include safety at school, healthy lifestyle choices, proper personal protective equipment (PPE), and safe driving habits.

The competition recognizes winners from both middle and high school, celebrating their commitment to safety.

Also present for the ceremony were art teachers Ms. Baron, Ms. Watkins and Mrs. Graham.

Notice of delinquent tax deed for 34357 South Route 53

PUBLIC NOTICE

TAX DEED NO.: 2026TX000112 FILED: 05/04/2026
TAKE NOTICE
County of: Will
Date Premises Sold: December 4, 2023
Certificate No.: 22-02679
Sold for General Taxes of (year): 2022
Sold for Special Assessment of (Municipality) and Special Assessment Number: N/A
Warrant No.: N/A Installment No.: N/A

THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN SOLD FOR DELINQUENT TAXES
Property Located at: 34357 South Route 53, Braidwood, Illinois 60408
Legal Description or Property Index No.: 02-24-17-103-004-0000
This notice is to advise you that the above property has been sold for delinquent taxes and that the period of redemption from the sale will expire on October 29, 2026.

The amount to redeem is subject to increase at 6 month intervals from the date of sale and may be further increased if the purchaser at the tax sale or his or her assignee pays any subsequently accruing taxes or special assessments to redeem the property from subsequent forfeitures or tax sales. Check with the county clerk as to the exact amount you owe before redeeming.

This notice is also to advise you that a petition has been filed for a tax deed which will transfer title and the right to possession of this property if redemption is not made on or before October 29, 2026.

This matter is set for hearing in the Circuit Court of this County in Joliet, Illinois on November 5, 2026 at 9:00 A.M. in Courtroom 803, Will County Courthouse, 100 West Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432.

You may be present at this hearing but your right to redeem will already have expired at that time.

YOU ARE URGED TO REDEEM IMMEDIATELY TO PREVENT LOSS OF PROPERTY

Redemption can be made at any time on or before October 29, 2026 by applying to the County Clerk of Will County, Illinois at the Office of the County Clerk in Joliet, Illinois. For further information contact the County Clerk: Address: 302 North Chicago Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432
Telephone: (815) 740-4615

P&N PROPERTIES INC
Purchaser or Assignee
Dated: 05/04/2026

CASE NUMBER: 2026TX000112
CERTIFICATE OF PURCHASE NUMBER: 22-02679
Walter David Hess
Alycia Ann Hess
Occupant
Will County Clerk
Claimants, Judgment Creditors and Decree Creditors, if any of the above described as "unknown owners"
"Unknown owners or parties interested in said land or lots"
Published in the Braidwood Journal May 20, 27 & June 3, 2026

Sheriff's sale of 106 Round House Street

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

PHH Mortgage Corporation
Plaintiff,
vs.
Karlee Cox a/k/a K. Cox; Madison Mason
a/k/a M. Mason; Unknown Owners and
Non Record Claimants
Defendant.

No. 25 FC 0331

NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

Public notice is hereby given that pursuant to a judgment entered in the above cause on the 11th day of February, 2026, MIKE KELLEY, Sheriff of Will County, Illinois, will on Thursday, the 11th day of June, 2026, commencing at 12:00 o'clock noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, sell at public auction to the highest and best bidder or bidders the following-described real estate:

THAT PART OF LOT 8, SOUTH OF A LINE DRAWN FROM A POINT IN THE WEST LINE OF SAID LOT 8, 60 FEET SOUTHERLY FROM THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF SAID LOT 8 TO A POINT IN THE EAST LINE OF SAID LOT 8, 46 FEET SOUTH OF THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF SAID LOT 8, IN BLOCK 14 OF THE CHICAGO AND WILMINGTON COAL COMPANY'S SUBDIVISION OF THE SOUTH HALF OF SECTION 8, IN TOWNSHIP 32 NORTH, AND IN RANGE 9 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, SITUATED IN THE CITY OF BRAIDWOOD, EXCEPT COAL AND OTHER MINERAL RIGHTS BENEATH THE SURFACE THEREOF AND THEIR RIGHT TO MINE AND REMOVE THE SAME, IN WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

Commonly known as: 106 Round House Street, Braidwood, IL 60408
Description of Improvements: SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
P.I.N.: 02-24-08-402-013-0000

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

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

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

FOR INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:
THE WIRBICKI LAW GROUP
33 W. Monroe St. Suite 1540
Chicago, Illinois 60603
P: 312-360-9455

Plaintiff's Attorney

MIKE KELLEY
Sheriff of Will County

Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, May 20, 27 and June 3, 2026.

Attorney Black files McDonald estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT
OF THE TWELFTH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY - IN PROBATE
No. 2026 PR 218

**IN THE MATTER OF
THE ESTATE OF
JOHN W. McDONALD
DECEASED**

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given to creditors of the death of JOHN W. McDONALD. Letters of office as Independent Executor were issued to PATRICK McDONALD, 904 Cassie Drive, Joliet, Illinois, 60435 whose attorney is DONALD F. BLACK, BLACK & BLACK LAWYERS, 201 Liberty Street, Suite 211, Morris, Illinois 60450.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at River Valley Justice Center, 3208 McDonough St., Joliet, IL 60431, with the representative, or both, within six months from the date of the first publication of this notice or, if mailing or delivery of a notice is required by Section 5/18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.

PATRICK McDONALD
INDEPENDENT EXECUTOR

**Donald F. Black
Black & Black Lawyers
201 Liberty Street
Suite 211
Morris, IL 60450
815-942-0594**

Published in the Braidwood Journal on May 13, 20, and 27, 2026.

Meents Law P.C. files Dalziel estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

**IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE
OF IRENE MARIE DALZIEL,
Deceased;
No. 2026 PR 235**

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Irene Marie Dalziel. Letters of Office as Independent Executor was issued on May 15, 2026, to Dennis J. Dalziel, whose address is 514 N. Center St., Braidwood, Illinois, 60408; whose attorney is Meents Law, P.C., 25158 West Eames Street, Unit A, Channahon, Illinois 60410. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at the WILL County Courthouse, River Valley Justice Center, 3208 West McDonough Street, Joliet, IL 60435, or with the representative, or both, on or before November 27, 2026, or if mailing or delivery of a notice from the representative is required by Section 18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a Claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the claimant to the representative and to the attorney within ten (10) days after it has been filed.

E-filing is now mandatory with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit <http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/faq/gethelp.asp> or talk with your local circuit clerk's office. If you cannot e-file, you may be able to get an exemption that allows you to file in-person or by mail. Ask your circuit clerk for more information or visit www.illinoislegalaid.org.

Dennis J. Dalziel
Independent Executor of the Estate of Irene M. Dalziel, Deceased

**Marilyn L. Wysocki
MEENTS LAW, P.C.
1861 Black Road
Joliet, Illinois 60435
Telephone: (815) 534-9515
Facsimile: (815) 534-9516
Attorney Code: 06198698
E-mail: MLWysocki@MeentsLaw.com**
Published in the Braidwood Journal, Wednesday, May 27, June 3 and 10, 2026.

Attorney Black files VanDuyne estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT
OF THE TWELFTH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY - IN PROBATE
No. 2026 PR 253

**In the Matter of the Estate of
MARLENE L. VANDUYNE,
Deceased**

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given to creditors of the death of Marlene L. VanDuyne. Letters of office as Independent Executor were issued to Diane Flynn, 23820 S. Frontage Rd., W. Channahon, Illinois, 60410 whose attorney is DONALD F. BLACK, BLACK & BLACK LAWYERS, 201 Liberty Street, Suite 211, Morris, Illinois 60450.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at River Valley Justice Center, 3208 McDonough St., Joliet, IL 60431, with the representative, or both, within six months from the date of the first publication of this notice or, if mailing or delivery of a notice is required by Section 5/18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.

DIANE FLYNN
INDEPENDENT EXECUTOR

**DONALD F. BLACK
BLACK & BLACK
201 Liberty Street
Suite 211
Morris, IL 60450
815-942-0594**

Published in the Braidwood Journal on May 20, 27 and June 3, 2026.



Courtesy photo

REED-CUSTER SCHOOL Superintendent Mark Mitchell (left) recognizes student Torian Ginger for winning the TREP Safety Poster competition during the Reed Custer School board meeting last week.

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E-mail: News & News Photos: news@fpnusa.com
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Eric D. Fisher, publisher

Bits and pieces, the strange and the odd

Editor's note: With Sandy taking a much-deserved vacation we are publishing one from her archives.

In going through the old newspapers to research this column, I occasionally come across small bits and pieces of information that make me stop and think, or sometimes laugh out loud. These small slices of life give us another look into Braidwood in the 19th century.

All of these quotes come from the *Wilmington Advocate*, whose editor Ed Conley was sometimes known to be a bit prejudice against Wilmington's sister city. For instance in August 1873 we read, "Braidwood merchants forge each other's names to beer orders for fun." We don't know if this is true, but it certainly didn't put Braidwood's beer merchants in a good light.

His puns in print are famous, and in January 1874 came the news that: "A young man in Braidwood has said, 'Dearest, will thou be mine?' to five women, and four of them are suing him for it. Braidwood has always been famous for its number of "mines." I didn't say they were funny, did I?

A confusing notice in the *Braidwood Journal* from March 1874 left me smiling. "All persons owning lots in the cemetery and have not occupied them, will have to occupy them or pay up by the 16th of March."

This small filler told



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

me what a romantic place Braidwood was in February 1875: "Upwards of 15,000 valentines passed through the Braidwood post office on Monday last." That would have been two and one-half for every man, woman, and child in the village!

And the following told me that there were many "diamonds in the rough" among those poor immigrants. "The Braidwood Literary Society comprises among its members four doctors, one phrenologist, one ex-professor of elocution, and a graduate with high honors in the classics." If you are wondering, a phrenologist tells fortunes by reading the bumps on peoples' heads.

The 1870s saw the rise of spiritualism, and Braidwood apparently had her share. We read on March 5, 1875; "A fact not generally known is the existence in Braidwood of a society of spiritualists, who privately held weekly séances, sometimes of a very successful character. It has just been disclosed by a prominent member of the society that at a late séance the spirit of an old Indian chief was materialized and imparted some interesting and valuable information in reference to the known existence to himself and tribe some 300 years ago, of geological deposits underlying this city and vicinity of the greatest value."

I've told you that Braidwood has at least 16

different nationalities, and probably at least that many religious organizations. But one religion, the Mormons, had an interest other than spiritual in the population. With all the strikes and unrest, many coal miners wanted to move farther west, but were afraid of the unknown, as well as the known (Indians.) The Mormons, who had left Illinois to immigrate to Utah, were in need of new workers. But since only Mormons were welcome, converts to the faith were needed.

Braidwood must have been very important to them as we read on March 19, 1875: "Joseph Smith, present chief of the Mormon Church, and eldest son of Joseph Smith, founder of that sect, visited the society of Mormons in Braidwood last week. He will again visit this city on the 16th and 17th of next month, and on those dates will deliver two lectures at the Grove schoolhouse on the tenets of that faith."

However it seems he made little impression, as on May 14, 1875 we also read, "Four different times on Saturday and Sunday last, Joseph Smith addressed large audiences at the Grove schoolhouse upon the Mormon question, both saints and sinners evincing considerable interest in the advent here of this wonderful prophet. His principal theme of discussion was a defense of the tenets of that faith. As the results of his labors we have yet to hear of one convert or one "outsider" who was present with brains enough to fathom his disconnected arguments."

In the category of



EDWARD CONLEY

strange boasts we read on March 26, 1875: "Braidwood furnished the giant and dwarf in the Joliet procession on the 17th," and on April 21, 1876: "Braidwood will not recognize the Queen's new title, Empress of India."

In the category of "Could it be true?" we have, "An Italian count in disguise, working in the "E" shaft for the past three years has just received a legacy from the old country of \$70,000, and is now seriously thinking of giving up digging coal." A neat story if it is.

And finally in the category of "laugh out loud," we have a story from the Braidwood section of the March 3, 1876 *Wilmington Advocate*: "Our post office is becoming quite a place of meeting for our belles and young bloods, who daily congregate there. But on Thursday, an incident happened between two certain parties who stood near the delivery window — their lips touched, and it was like the sound of a cow drawing her hoofs out of the mud."

Register for Braidwood Garage Sale Days

The First Presbyterian Church of Braidwood will host the annual citywide garage sale days Friday and Saturday, June 12 and 13, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., with no rain date.

All interested families and organizations who wish to be included in the town listing should return the entry form and \$8 in cash or check (payable to First Presbyterian Church of Braidwood) to: The Braidwood Garage Sale Days, 812 W. Main St., Braidwood, IL 60408, by noon Sunday, June 7.

Each entry will receive town listings to post, hand out to customers and a special house marker for display to identify paid participants. The marker will also make houses easier to find. These items can be picked up at the First Presbyterian Church, 106 S. Lincoln St., on Wednesday, June 10, from 6-8 p.m. at the front entrance.

Additional maps along with a luncheon will be available the church. Advertising for the garage sale days will be in local newspapers and on radio stations.

Complete this portion and return it along with a check (payable to First Presbyterian Church of Braidwood) for \$8 to the Braidwood Garage Sales, 812 W. Main Street, Braidwood, IL 60408, no later than noon Sunday, June 7.

Name_____

Address_____

Phone_____

Partial listing of items to be sold _____

Fossil Ridge Library News

Adult Programs

Monday, June 1- Saturday Aug. 1- Disguise a duck-During Library Hours- Description: Disguise a duck for our Rubber Ducky Costume contest! Pick up your rubber ducky from the Adult Services desk June 1-20. Take your duck home, dress it up, then return it to the Adult Services desk by June 30th. Ducks will be displayed in the library during the month of July and patrons will vote for their favorite duck. The winning duck will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card. You must have a Fossil Ridge Public Library card to participate.

Tuesday, June 2-9 and 30-Puzzles and Projects-1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Description: Looking for a relaxing and social way to spend an afternoon? Join us for Puzzles & Projects, a casual gathering just for seniors who enjoy crafting, puzzling, and good company. Bring along your favorite craft project-knitting, crocheting, embroidery, scrapbooking, coloring, or anything else you're working on-and enjoy an hour of creativity with others. Prefer puzzles? We'll have a variety of jigsaw puzzles available for you to help complete while

chatting and connecting with fellow participants.

Thursday, June 4- Game Time! Chicago Sports Outside the lines (registration req'd)- 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Description: Hut!...Strike!...Swish! Sports history in Chicago is loaded with athletes, teams, and their combined virtues and shortcomings. But there are legends that aren't limited to the playing surface. From the voices to the venues and from the hometown heroes to the innovations, the legacies are rich. Join us as we welcome historian and Chicago native Clarence Goodman for Game Time! Chicago Sports Outside the Lines.

Monday, June 8- Well-Read Book Club 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Description: 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. - June's Title: *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* by Nicholas Carr. Copies are available at the front desk or online in our digital consortium.



Photos by Angela Rose

FOUR REED-CUSTER Middle School athletes placed during the IESA's State Track and Field finals held in East Peoria Thursday - Saturday. Panthers who medaled include (from left) Emmy Urban - 2nd in shot put; Sydney Bohac - 2nd in pole vault; Bryce Lamb - 3rd in pole vault; and Payton Pivonka - 1st in the girls 100.



PLACING SECOND in state in the pole vault is Sydney Bohac



Photo by Angela Rose

REED-CUSTER MIDDLE School's Bryce Lamb clears the bar to finish 3rd in state in pole vault.

Panthers place at State



REED-CUSTER MS' Payton Pivonka finished 1st in the girls 100.



LADY PANTHER Emmy Urban placed 2nd in the state in shot put.



BOAT CAPTAIN Pete Banach took his dedicated anglers Mady Meyer (right) and Nathan Banach out early Thursday as boat six in the IHSA Sectional Bass Fishing championship located at Big Basin Des Plaines River. The river was not giving up fish freely but they weighed in at 2:30 p.m. with a five fish limit at 7.80 pounds making them 6th out of 30 boats and qualifying for state. The Casting Comets team will travel to Shelbyville, IL on June 4-6 to fish a state trophy. Coach Connie Rutherford commended the trio for their commitment, passion and a "no give up attitude" that resulted in their qualification for state.

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Two sides to this

COAL CITY—At a recent public meeting, a veteran reminded officials he fought for Americans' rights. He is absolutely right. But rights do not only belong to people holding protest signs. Property rights matter too. That is the uncomfortable part some people refuse to admit. In America, landowners also have rights under laws, zoning ordinances, hearings, and due process. You do not lose those rights simply because a crowd becomes emotional. The dangerous road begins when people decide lawful use of property should depend entirely on who shouts the loudest. Today it is a data center. Tomorrow maybe it is apartments. A church. A mosque. A factory. A business owned by outsiders. Something else somebody decides they "just don't want." That is why laws exist in the first place - to stop governing by intimidation. Citizens absolutely have the right to question projects. They should. Good questions improve developments. But there is a difference between asking questions and demanding total control over somebody else's legally owned property. Freedom only works when rights apply equally - even to people you disagree with.

Get a Life

COAL CITY—Overheard the ladies talking in Jewel about land south of Coal City being annexed which will mean the single-track railroad will be upgraded to two tracks and go through town again up to the warehouses. You have too much time to dream up the most ridiculous problems with development. It will never happen. Period. That line is dead at Spring Road forever. While I am at it, I was told water usage is expected to be 1.8 million. They use more electricity than 100 homes in a day. Sound at 100' from the parking lot and building will average 90 decibels on a normal day, higher when super busy. Do you see how propaganda can warp your mind if you believe Facebook memes? Now you have outsiders scamming people to send in money. Now you have innocent people believing someone got low-balled. They demand answers from the city. I demand two numbers from the objectors. How much was offered and what was demanded by the owner of the homes. Publish it before you fight for emotions. Stop wanting others to make you rich with lies.

The homeless problem

BRAIDWOOD—I'm responding to "No More Riffraff" in last week's Soundoff. I'm not for Pritzker forcing substandard housing on towns, but the homeless problem is really out of hand. You don't see it much in these little towns, but Chicago, Joliet, and even Naperville have a huge problem. Of course that does mean that subsidized housing is inevitable and peo-

ple from Chicago will be plunked down in the middle of some small town. Some are riffraff for sure, but a lot of others are people who work full-time and still can't afford rent.

Message to Tom

COAL CITY—If you want to keep your job fight for it! I worked with one of the board members and they tried to take over my job. I told them to stay out of my department. I won't name name's but I knew there would be trouble when the board hired that person. So Tom put the gloves on and fight for your job. I want you to stay. I'm concerned of what is happening to our club and not the only one thinking that. Before long this person will try to be head of the whole area club. Board members wake up!

Obeys the laws

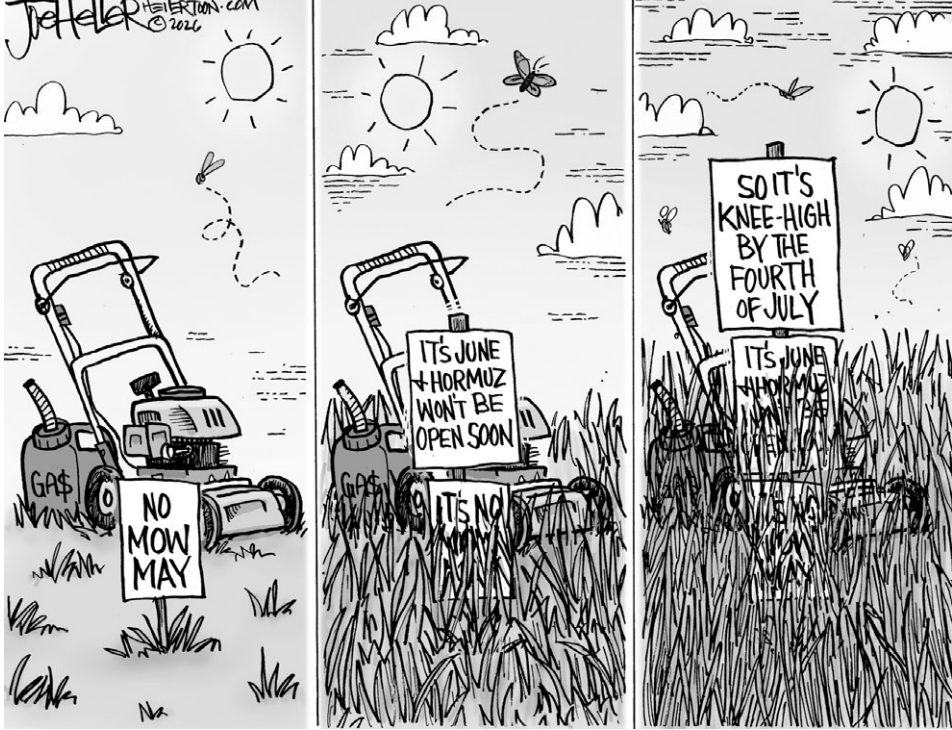
BRAIDWOOD—Now that Summer is here and people are driving their golf carts like the rules don't apply to them, hopefully the police department will start cracking down on the ones who decide to violate the law and drive down state controlled roadways or sidewalks. The ones who drive over the railroad tracks need to be ticketed the hardest because there is absolutely no way to legally drive a golf cart from one side of town, over the railroad tracks to the other side of town.

Kratom helps some

COAL CITY—It's genuinely baffling the decision to ban Kratom. It's a travesty and injustice to personal freedoms. It's fine if you want to gamble and drink your life away. But God forbid consenting adults purchase a supplement. The outright banning without any nuance is a misstep in both personal freedoms and the progress we have made regarding the opioids crisis in this community. Shame on those who supported this decision. Go after 7-oH, that's fair game, but there is genuinely therapeutic and medicinal use in this product and banning it will have the opposite effect of what you're hoping. People will go back to doing heroin. And in turn, people will continue to die from fentanyl. People will turn to prescription drugs and alcohol for pain and anxiety management. We have personal freedoms in this country or at least we should. It's only a matter of time before someone's killed on a golf cart. Or dies in an ambulance waiting for a freight train to pass. Someone's mauled to death by a pit bull. But thank Christ someone banned Kratom. We can all sleep safer tonight.

The guts to do it

WILMINGTON— This is Tom from Wilmington. I'm reading "Has life improved." The writer is saying has anyone that voted for the current administration noticed any improvement in their life. Yes, the borders are closed. Illegal



aliens hopefully will not be able to vote in the next election like they did in the last election. Yes, gas prices are high but Iran will never get a nuclear weapon. So that person's children and grandchildren will not have to deal with the psychopaths in Iran. Donald Trump was the only administration that had the guts to go over and do that. Remember Barrack Obama gave them two pallets full of Euros and said please don't build a nuclear weapon, but they did anyway.

Can't hide lies forever

WILMINGTON—As gas prices, groceries, housing, clothes, construction materials and every other thing we Americans use soar higher, here's a reminder. We now enter the fourth month of his "two week tops" war. This \$40 billion war, 13 dead soldiers, hundreds injured, is just a distraction. We realize it will accomplish nothing that we didn't already have with the Iran Treaty he tore up in 2017. Nothing. I ask you please use a realistic perspective. Pretend you are in a jury. We all know innocent people do whatever possible to prove innocence. Guilty people deny, lie, and point in a different direction to confuse and flood your intelligence with confusion. The FBI doesn't call a victim back for a second interview if they don't think something is wrong, but this victim was called back for four interviews. This was in 2019, his first term. Suddenly this particular file was "no longer important." Thinking the Epstein files were no longer relevant he campaigned in '24 on "full disclosure" and justice for victims. He even signed a bill in

December 2025 for the files' immediate release. Then suddenly reversed. Why? Why redact perpetrators but openly list some victims identification? Innocent people want the full evidence exposed to prove they did not do anything wrong but not him, why? We all were taught to tell the truth because you can't hide lies forever, you will eventually get caught and exposed. These files and the hundreds of victims will continue to exist and eventually will be exposed to the American people, some will continue to not believe actual victims of sexual assault and child trafficking but believe just one guy who has lied, deceived and conned for 80 years and got away with it. But it's not over now or ever.

Ongoing issues

COAL CITY —The community is understandably frustrated about feeling misled regarding the data center and other ongoing issues. As our small towns continue to grow at a rapid pace, it's important for residents to remember these concerns during the next voting season when choosing leadership and mayors for Coal City and Diamond. If growth continues without transparency and careful planning, in five years our communities may no longer resemble the small towns many of us chose to call home.

Trump's latest con

WILMINGTON—How can anyone defend Trump's latest con? He forced the IRS and DOJ to never investigate him, his family and his businesses for past, present or future crimes. What type of monster has America elected?

Illinois gas tax to automatically increase July 1

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

Illinois drivers pay the second-highest state gas tax in the country. Illinois is one of only a few states that applies a 6.2% sales tax on top of excise gas tax.

Nevertheless, residents are dreading yet another increase in the state gasoline tax on July 1. The increase will push the state motor fuel tax to 49.6 cents per gallon, up from 48.3 cents, as part of an automatic inflation adjustment tied to the state's 2019 infrastructure program known as "Rebuild Illinois."

For the average driver, the increase may sound small — just over one penny more per gallon — but combined with already elevated fuel prices, many Illinois residents say the added cost comes at a difficult time. Illinois already

has some of the highest gas prices in the Midwest, with statewide averages recently nearing \$5 per gallon.

Funding infrastructure

State officials say the tax revenue is needed to fund road repairs, bridge maintenance, and transportation infrastructure projects across Illinois. The annual adjustment is tied to inflation, meaning the gas tax automatically rises most years without lawmakers needing to pass a separate bill.

Still, critics argue the increase disproportionately affects working families, commuters, and rural residents who rely heavily on driving. Republican lawmakers have proposed temporary gas tax relief measures, including a six-month pause on certain fuel taxes, though those proposals have not advanced in Springfield.

Another burden

Transportation and energy analysts note that taxes are only one part of the price drivers pay at the pump. Global oil markets, refinery issues, seasonal fuel blends, and geopolitical tensions are also contributing to higher gasoline prices nationwide.

For many Illinois residents, however, the practical effect is straightforward: Higher transportation costs. A commuter filling a 15-gallon tank once a week is paying nearly \$25 more than one year ago.

Families with multiple vehicles or long daily commutes may feel a larger impact when combined with broader inflation and rising fuel costs. Trucking companies, delivery drivers, and small businesses are also expected to absorb higher operating expenses, which can eventually affect

consumer prices for goods and services.

No relief in Illinois

Neighboring states such as Kentucky and Indiana have recently explored temporary gas tax

relief measures amid rising fuel prices, increasing pressure on Illinois leaders to consider similar action. So far, Governor JB Pritzker has not announced plans to suspend or delay the

scheduled increase.

Illinois currently ranks among the states with the highest overall gas tax burden when state excise taxes, sales taxes, and local fuel taxes are combined.

Large traveling car show to roll through area

The HOT ROD Power Tour returns to the area June 8 and the team is making sure 2026 is all about Route 66!

The most iconic highway in the country is turning 100 this year, so the largest traveling car show will make several stops on the legendary highway to show off more than 6,000 cars and trucks of all years,

makes, and models for tens of thousands of automotive enthusiasts and fans.

The 32nd annual HOT ROD Power Tour takes place from June 8-12, and will hit five venues starting with Route 66 Raceway in Joliet, on Monday, June 8.

Watch for hot rods and classic cars and trucks as they pass through Wilmington along the

Mother Road as they travel next to the Village of Rantoul in Rantoul, IL; then World Wide Technology Raceway in St. Louis, MO; Missouri State University in Springfield, MO; and Tulsa Raceway Park in Tulsa, OK.

All event details and ticket information is available at hotrodpowertour.us.

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Plans for solared power trains

Dear EarthTalk: Is any-body working on solar-powered trains, and if so, when will they be ready for prime time?

-- Paul Best, Los Angeles, CA



SOLAR POWERED trains are becoming a reality in the UK and India, but why not in the U.S. as well?

Solar-powered trains run on the Sun's energy to operate, via solar panels placed on train stations, on the roofs of trains, or most commonly, from the rail tracks.

They also often gain indirect energy from the sun, using electricity from solar farms that is sometimes stored in batteries to facilitate auxiliary functions other than propulsion, including lighting, ventilation and GPS systems. Most solar train travel as of 2026 has been for short distances, optimal for tourism and urban shuttles, like the Byron Bay

Train in Australia.

However, there are significant plans to achieve long-term solar train travel across the world. Unlike traditional diesel-powered trains, solar-powered trains are highly sustainable and offer an improved climate future because they rely on clean and renewable energy. Like other renewable energy sources, solar power improves the environment because it decreases environmental tensions and pollutants that arise with the use of fossil fuels.

In 2019, the International Earth Agency

predicted that the global rail network could expand to almost 2.1 million kilometers by 2050. In 2024, Argentina unveiled its first solar-powered tourist train with a range of about 41 kilometers.

Since introducing their first solar-powered train in 2017, India has also joined the effort. Indian Railways plans to develop 20 gigawatts of solar energy in vacant lands by 2030. The U.K. and Switzerland have also made efforts to introduce solar energy in train travel.

In 2017, Alice Bell, co-director at the U.K. climate

change group Possible, wrote in The Guardian, "We think solar could power 20 percent of the Merseyrail network in Liverpool, as well as 15 percent of commuter routes in Kent, Sussex and Wessex...trains and trams all over the world could be running on sun in a few years' time."

Approved in 2008, California's solar-powered high-speed train will run approximately 1287.5 kilometers and is the first of its kind across the world. This train is set to be completed in 2030 and hopes to connect to cities like Vancouver, San Diego and Los Angeles.

While solar-powered train projects are promising, they still face financial, operational and timing challenges. Many have to do with train maintenance and durability, which can impact the safety of train operations. Nevertheless, solar trains could completely shift the current state of climate-conscious transportation.

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Will County Board approves massive solar facility despite strong opposition

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

After months of heated debate, emotional testimony and legal battles, the Will County Board voted Thursday, May 21, to approve Earthrise Energy's controversial 6,100-acre "Pride of the Prairie" solar farm stretching across Green Garden, Wilton and Manhattan townships.

The sprawling project passed in a narrow 12-8 vote, splitting the board largely along party lines

and drawing sharp reactions from residents who fear rural farmland is being transformed into an industrial energy corridor.

Opponents warned the development would blanket thousands of acres with nearly one million solar panels and hundreds of thousands of steel posts, permanently changing the landscape.

"If you vote this through we're toast," Manhattan Township farmer Laura Heindrich told board members before

the vote.

The proposal survived court challenges and repeated accusations that Earthrise failed to provide enough information about wetlands, drainage and the project's overall impact. Attorney Steve Becker, representing nearby residents, warned county officials they could face lawsuits no matter how they voted.

Supporters, including labor unions and renewable energy advocates, argued the project will create more than 1,000 jobs

and generate millions in tax revenue over the next several decades.

Will County Board Speaker Joe Van Dune voted in favor of the solar facility.

Several board members said recent Illinois laws left them with little choice but to approve the project if it met state standards.

"For me it really boils down with the fact that the state of Illinois has removed our discretion in this matter," board member Sherry Newquist said.

The decision marks one of the largest solar approvals in Will County history and another major transformation of the county's rapidly disappearing rural landscape.

Grundy Bank announces a lip sync battle for charity

Grundy Bank is proud to announce the First Annual Grundy Bank Lip Sync Battle for Charity, a fundraising event bringing together local nonprofits for an afternoon of entertainment, friendly competition and community support.

The event will take place on Friday, June 12, 2026, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Fraternal Order of Eagles in Downtown Morris. Fundraising will run from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM, followed by performances beginning at noon. Rielly Sanders will host the event and perform both before and after the competition.

"We're excited to introduce the First Annual

Grundy Bank Lip Sync Battle for Charity as part of our summer event lineup," said Marketing Director of Grundy Bank, Ava Terry. "This new and interactive event offers our community a fun way to come together in support of local nonprofits. We look forward to seeing the creativity of participating teams and the energy from the audience!"

Participating nonprofit teams will perform their lip sync routines in front of a live audience. Teams will consist of 1-4 participants, with performances lasting 90-120 seconds. All song selections will be family-friendly and will be kept confidential until performance time.

Winners will be determined through a combination of fundraising totals and audience voting. Grundy Bank will award a \$250 donation to the nonprofit that raises the most funds during the event, and another \$250 donation plus a trophy to the audience-choice winner.

This event aims to bring the community together in a lively, high-energy atmosphere that highlights creativity, fun, and support for local nonprofits.

The participating nonprofit teams will be announced on Friday, May 15, on the Grundy Bank Facebook page.

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OBITUARIES

James Cletcher

WILMINGTON—James Carey Cletcher, 76, of Wilmington, formerly of Downers Grove, passed away Friday, May 22, 2026 at Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee.

Born July 14, 1949 in Chicago, James was the son of James and Marjorie (Haase) Cletcher. He was raised in Downers Grove and where he graduated from high school. Jim entered apprenticeship with Pipefitters Local 597, served as a journeyman and dedicated 47 years of service before retiring. He relocated to Wilmington in 1985, and work many industrial jobs throughout Illinois and Indiana, including the Braidwood Nuclear Generation Station, where he would meet Rachael Longest Forsythe. Jim and she married in 1991 and they lived together and made their home in rural Wilmington.

He was a great fan of cars, being a member of the NHRA and the POCl Pontiac Car Club, and collected several classic cars over the years he was very proud of. Jim also took great pleasure in woodworking and refinishing old furniture. Though he was a quiet, stoic individual, he was a kind man who loved his grandchildren dearly.

Survivors include his wife, Rachael Longest Forsythe Cletcher, and his mother-in-law, Carolyn Longest; children: Jennifer (Rick) Arias, Eric Cletcher, Meghan Cletcher, Ryan Cletcher, Daniel Cletcher, Anne Cletcher, and Christine (Clark) Forsythe Allen; daughter-in-law,



Cori Forsythe; grandchildren: Corey, Lacey, Jarin, Courtney, Camdon, Cougar, Kellen, Daxton, Levi, Opal, Evelyn, and Stella; great-grandchildren: Xavier, Kinzley, Monika, Grayson, Colton, Weston, and Everleigh; brothers and sisters-in-law: Vern Longest, Gloria Longest, Rick (Beth) Longest, Alan Longest, and Melinda Tankersley; uncle, Glenn Haase, and aunt, Carol Haase; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Jim was preceded in death by his parents; mother and father-in-law: LaVern Longest and Virginia Longest; his son, Jason Forsythe; his grandchild, Mason Potter; sister, Peggy Canada; and sister-in-law, Joy Longest.

The family will receive friends at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Road, in Wilmington on Friday, May 29, 2026 from 4 p.m. until the time of service at 7 p.m. Cremation rites will be accorded following the services.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made as gifts in Jim's memory to The Wilmington School District 209-U Foundation for Excellence, 209 U Wildcat Court, Wilmington, IL 60481.

Family and friends may sign the guest book, upload photographs or share Jim's memorial page online by logging onto: www.BaskervilleFuneral.com.

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

Kathryn Summers

SILVIS, IL—Kathryn Ann Summers, 90, of Silvis, IL, passed away at the University of Iowa Hospital surrounded by immediate family on April 26, 2026. Despite the highly skilled care she received in the ICU, Kathryn died from a devastating brain bleed after a fall.

Kathryn was born on April 13, 1936, in Joliet, the eldest child of Della (Macaluso) and John Owens. She graduated from Coal City High School in 1954 and went to work at the Joliet Ammunition Plant. She married Morris (Bud) Summers on Dec. 8, 1956, at Assumption Church, Coal City, where they built their home and raised three daughters.

Playing a major supportive and nurturing role in her daughters' education and activities kept Kathryn very busy. She was a Girl Scout leader throughout her daughters' childhoods.

When the family moved to Eldridge, IA, in 1973, Kathryn volunteered in local elementary education and eventually was hired full-time at Rock Island Arsenal, retiring in 1992. They built a retirement home at Lake Shelbyville and enjoyed volunteering for community projects like the Food Bank and the easy pace of retired life until they returned to the Quad Cities in 2003.

Kathryn's strong faith and deeply held beliefs defined her attitudes and actions. She worked with her church's Social Concerns committee and volunteered for other charitable organizations. Kathryn



also adopted many 'honorary' children, grandchildren, and godchildren. She generously shared her time, wisdom, and skills with them and they loved her for that. Kathryn was a Cubs fan who enjoyed baseball as well as camping, traveling, and gardening. She was an amazing cook and a star baker creating legendary Christmas cookies and her famous rum cake.

Kathryn is survived by her daughter Karen Summers of Silvis; her daughter and son-in-law Kim and Vincent O'Brien of Mablethorpe, England; and Karla's widower, Michael Day of Coal Valley.

Kathryn was preceded in death by her devoted husband of 66 years, Bud Summers, her much loved daughter Karla Summers Day, her sister Nancy Owens and her parents, Jack and Della Owens.

Visitation will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 28, 2026, at Christ the King Catholic Church (3209 60th St. Moline, IL 61265).

The Funeral Mass will follow at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday at the church, with the burial at Moline Memorial Park's Niches directly afterwards.

Cremation rites will be accorded.

Esterdahl Mortuary and Crematory, Ltd., Moline are assisting the family with arrangements. Memorials may be made to Christ the King Catholic Church or to a Local Food Drive.

Memories may be shared online by visiting esterdahl.com.

Vendors wanted

Organizers are looking for craft vendors for a craft/vendor show at the American Legion in Gardner on June 6,

during the all town garage sales. For more information call 815-641-5334 or email creativegemzcraft@gmail.com.

Daniel Mulhall



VIRGINIA BEACH, VA—Daniel Glenn Mulhall, 80, of Virginia Beach, VA, passed away on May 5th, 2026.

Dan was born on July 8th, 1945 in Joliet, IL. He was the son of Earl Mulhall and Bernice Zeman (Joseph).

After graduating from Coal City High School in 1963, he enlisted in the United States Navy. He served his country for over 20 years, being commissioned as an officer along the way, and eventually retiring honorably as a Lieutenant Commander (LCDR - O4). While in the Navy, Dan attended Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN under the Naval Enlisted Scientific Education Program (NESEP), graduating with a BS in Mathematics. Dan served aboard multiple ships, including the USS Chicago (CG 11), USS Buchanan (DDG 18), USS Davis (DD 937), USS High Point (PCH 1), and USS Yorktown (CG 48). Throughout his career, he earned multiple commendations for his service, including the Navy Commendation Medal (x 2), Navy Achievement Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device, Combat Action Ribbon, Navy Unit Commendation (x3), Meritorious Unit Commendation, Navy "E" Ribbon, Navy Expeditionary Medal, and numerous campaign and theater ribbons.

After retiring from the Navy, Dan worked the remainder of his career in pri-



vate defense contractors, solving engineering and logistical problems with Advanced Combat Systems Engineering and Analysis Corporation (ACSEAC), Digital Systems Research (DSR), and SAIC.

In 1967, Dan met Ruth Ann Hanley, and they wed in 1970. They have two sons, Brian and Christopher ("Topher"), and two grandsons, Topher's sons Gavin and Fletcher.

After retiring in 2012, Dan spent his time perfecting his lawn, spending time with Ruth Ann, and, following the birth of his grandsons, becoming an active and loving grandfather ("OG").

He is survived by his sister Roberta Byron (Paul), his wife Ruth Ann Mulhall, his sons Brian and Topher Mulhall, his grandsons Gavin and Fletcher Mulhall, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Dan was predeceased by his father, Earl; mother, Bernice; step father, Joseph Zeman; his brother Jack, and his sister Terri Dols (John).

A memorial service is planned for June 2nd, 2026 at Smith & Williams Funeral Home in Virginia Beach, VA. Following the memorial, his ashes will be interred with full honors at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk, VA.

In lieu of flowers or gifts, the family encourages donations to the Wounded Warrior Project.

Keeping our neighborhoods safe starts in the yard

BY PAM THARGE
CITY OF WILMINGTON CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

As a code enforcement officer, I spend my days walking or driving neighborhoods, responding to complaints, and helping residents maintain safe and healthy properties. While many people think code enforcement is only about appearances, the truth is that yard safety plays a major role in protecting families, neighbors and entire communities.

An unsafe yard can quickly become more than an eyesore. Overgrown grass and weeds can hide dangerous debris, attract rodents, and create fire hazards during dry weather. Broken fences, discarded appliances, exposed nails, and piles of junk increase the risk of injuries-especially for children who may play nearby. Standing water in old tires, buckets, or clogged gutters can also become breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other pests.

One of the most common concerns we address is the improper storage of materials. Loose lumber, construction debris, or unsecured equipment can shift during storms or high winds, causing damage to

nearby homes and vehicles. In some cases, abandoned items may block sidewalks or visibility at intersections, creating safety concerns for both drivers and pedestrians.

Pet safety is another important issue. Fences should be secure and maintained to prevent animals from escaping or entering neighboring properties. Residents should also ensure yards are free from toxic chemicals, sharp objects, and unsafe conditions that could harm pets or wildlife.

Many homeowners are surprised to learn that yard maintenance is often tied directly to local safety ordinances. These rules are not designed to punish residents but to prevent accidents, reduce neighborhood hazards, and preserve property values. In most communities, simple upkeep such as mowing grass, removing trash, trimming trees, and safely storing equipment can make a significant difference.

From my perspective, the best neighborhoods are not necessarily the most expensive or the most perfectly landscaped. They are the ones where residents take pride in keeping their properties

safe and respectful of those around them. A well-maintained yard sends a message that the people living there care about their home, their neighbors and their community.

Code enforcement works best when residents and local officials work together. Most violations can be corrected quickly with communication and cooperation. Our goal is always education first, helping property owners understand how small changes can improve safety for everyone.

However, as the City Enforcement Officer I will write tickets to residents who do not take care of their property. It isn't something I like to do as in this day and age a ticket and court costs can add a financial burden to already strained family budgets. Voluntary compliance has always been my preferred route to take.

As warmer months approach and families spend more time outdoors, now is the perfect opportunity to walk around your property and look at it through a safety lens. Removing hazards today could prevent injuries tomorrow and help keep our neighborhoods clean, safe, and welcoming for all.

America 250

Stephen A. Douglas and a nation of law

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of essays of Illinois history as America celebrates its 250th anniversary this Fourth of July.

BY REG ANKROM

In 1834, Abraham Lincoln, a first-term state representative, spotted Stephen A. Douglas in the State Capitol at Vandalia lobbying for a bill he wrote to change the way state's attorneys were appointed.

Lincoln, a full foot taller than the 5'4" Douglas, nudged seatmate John Todd Stuart and said, "That's the least man I ever saw."

It was a rare moment after that incident that Lincoln disparaged the diminutive Douglas.

By 1856, Lincoln would write of his political rival: "Twenty-two years ago Judge Douglas and I first became acquainted. We were both young then; he a trifle younger than I. Even then, we were both ambitious; I, perhaps, quite as much so as he. With me, the race of ambition has been a failure-a flat failure; with him it has been one of splendid success. His name fills the nation; and is not unknown, even in foreign lands."

Douglas's rise in Illinois politics, unlike that of Lincoln, was meteoric: state's attorney, organizer and chairman of the statewide Democratic Party, state representative, secretary of state, and by age 27 a justice of the Illinois Supreme Court, headquartered at Quincy.

His work to shape the western half of the nation was Douglas's central contribution to the United States. He championed an "ocean-bound republic," Atlantic to Pacific, and pledged to eliminate lines on the map that designated interests of France, Great Britain, and Spain in the continent.

For 10 years, Northern fears of and

Southern desires for slavery's expansion kept Texas out of the Union. Douglas proposed the way to bring it in: by a simple majority vote in Congress instead of by treaty, which would have required an impossible two-thirds vote in the Senate.

Douglas's strategy on December 19, 1845, made Texas the Union's 28th state. It also made him leader of the expansionist Young America wing of the national Democratic Party.

As chairman of House and Senate Committees on Territories, Douglas authored bills that framed the nation's westward expansion and internal improvements that would link the west to the Union. It was his great achievement, the Compromise of 1850, that annexed the 529,000 square miles of land Mexico ceded to the United States in 1848 after the American-Mexican War.

When Henry Clay's eight-month effort failed to bring in the vast territory, Douglas took charge. Realizing how closely the South guarded its institution of slavery as well as a growing antagonism for it in the North, Douglas engineered the agreements that in six weeks won approval of the Compromise of 1850.

During the Senate debates, Douglas warned the South that 17 new states would be created from western territories. He predicted all would be free.

History, Douglas said, demonstrated that if allowed to decide for themselves, the people would choose freedom over slavery. At the time the Constitution was ratified, he said, twelve of the thirteen states had slavery. By mid-century, seven had abolished it. The people, not the federal government, did that, Douglas argued.

All the fuss in Congress, then, was abstraction. No federal law or congressional intervention-not the Ordinance of 1787, the Missouri Compromise, or any kindred legislation-had stopped the existence or spread of slavery.

Voters in California, Oregon, even his own state of Illinois, did that.

It was Douglas's decade of experience in trying to pass territorial organization bills that made it easier for him in 1854 to agree to repeal the Missouri Compromise line. Congress had denied each of his proposals to extend the line for the annexations of Texas and Oregon, the Mexican Cession, and three of his five Nebraska Bills.

Douglas told an Illinois State Fair crowd in October 1854 that it was Lincoln's own Whig Party that caused the failures of Douglas's proposal to extend the 36°30' Missouri parallel.

Douglas argued that the Compromise of 1850 had replaced the Missouri Compromise with popular sovereignty. He was surprised at the backlash his Kansas-Nebraska law caused, the death of the Whig Party and the rise of the new Republican Party, the damage to Democratic strength in the Congress, and the violence of "Bleeding Kansas."

A result was the near-win by the nascent Republican Party's first presidential candidate, western explorer John C. Fremont. Without a single electoral vote from the South, Fremont would have been elected the 15th president had he won Pennsylvania and Illinois's 37 electoral votes. With the North's population far outpacing the South's, Douglas foresaw that Republicans could win the Electoral College in 1860 without a single Southern vote.

Southerners, too, recognized danger. In December 1856, radical slave owner William Lowndes Yancey of Alabama wrote, "We must then [1860] choose between submission and secession."

In an exhaustive campaign throughout Illinois in 1858, Douglas retained his US Senate seat, but challenger Abraham Lincoln made his mark upon the nation. Their central theme was slavery, Douglas justifying it by the Constitution and saying

popular sovereignty would resolve it, and Lincoln suggesting that no vote could make the wrong right.

On April 23, 1860, Douglas's 47th birthday, Democrats convened in Charleston, South Carolina, to nominate their presidential candidate. Seven days and 57 votes later, they adjourned, reconvened in Baltimore, and nominated Douglas. With Republicans sweeping Northern statewide elections, Douglas knew in August he would not win. He went south to campaign not for himself but for the Union.

Meeting president-elect Lincoln in Washington, DC, on February 27, 1861, Douglas pledged to remain the loyal opposition but promised his support for Lincoln's efforts to reunite the dividing nation. Then he did as Lincoln asked. He returned to Springfield to call on patriots to defend the Union.

"There can be no neutrals in this war, only patriots or traitors."

Exhausted by his campaign and saddened by a dividing nation, Douglas died in Chicago at 9:10 a.m. Monday, June 3, 1861. It was now up to one Illinoisan to preserve the nation his fellow Illinoisan had helped to build.

Reg Ankrom of Jacksonville is the author of Stephen A. Douglas: The Political Apprenticeship and Stephen A. Douglas, Western Man. He is working on a third volume, Stephen A. Douglas and Union. Ankrom recently edited and contributed to Tales of John Wood and His Adams County, an anthology published by the Quincy and Adams County Historical Society to commemorate Adams County's Bicentennial year.

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Legislators oppose Gov. Pritzker's budget cuts

In response to a question last week from my associate Isabel Miller, Gov. JB Pritzker said he didn't think a group of progressive legislators could pass their progressive revenue bills through both chambers by the end of the spring session.



Rich Miller

"They've been working very hard on getting something done," Pritzker said of the bicameral progressive effort to at least raise enough money to prevent the governor's proposed budget cuts to a host of state programs.

However, Gov. Pritzker continued, "It doesn't appear that they're able to get something done through the House or the Senate right now," adding that sometimes it takes time to accomplish "big things." The session is scheduled to end on May 31.

A list of the governor's proposed budget cuts was circulating among state legislators last week. Many of those legislators oppose those budget cuts and want to raise "progressive revenues" to make sure they don't happen.

The total cuts they came up with is a bit more than \$384 million, although they warn that their list of cuts is "non-exhaustive" and "subject to additions."

The cuts range from zeroing out a \$118 million enacted appropriation in

this year's proposed budget for safety net hospitals; to an \$11.4 million proposed reduction in homeless funding; to halving a student loan relief program for people employed at community-based human service organizations; to cutting the percentage of state income tax revenues received by local governments, resulting in a \$60 million reduction.

The current state budget funded a pilot program in five counties to bolster pretrial services. That \$3.5 million wasn't included in the governor's proposed budget for next year.

Ben & Jerry's brought ice cream to the Statehouse last week to support the Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice's funding push to save the program.

I sent the list of cuts to the governor's office, which disputed whether some of those cuts are actually cuts.

Several spending programs, including the \$118 million for safety net hospitals, were added last year by legislators (as is always the case with that money).

In other words, the governor doesn't want a direct comparison of the currently enacted state budget to his proposed budget for next fiscal year. Instead, Pritzker prefers a

comparison between his proposed budget last year and the new spending plan he unveiled in February.

Eight of the 19 proposed cuts the governor's office annotated fell into that "legislative initiative" category, for about \$157 million.

"What some are calling 'cuts' are often temporary legislative add-ons returning to normal levels or adjustments that better reflect demand," the governor's office claimed via statement.

Actually, many of those add-ons are put back every year. The safety net hospital funding is a prime example. Legislators who represent low-income areas with financially insecure hospitals fight every single year to make sure they get some money.

"The state will continue to protect critical services and drive responsible fiscal decisions that preserve stability and support the people who rely on them most," Pritzker's office statement continued.

But the governor's office also claims that homeless spending was cut because of "lower demand," even though homelessness has increased, many programs constantly run out of money and the wait time for single adults in the Cook County suburbs to access shelter is a whopping 122 days.

A couple of education programs were reduced because the Illinois State Board of Education asked for the reductions, the governor's office claimed.

The progressives also tallied a \$45 million property tax relief program connected to education when, in fact, it was not funded in the current budget. So, at least that one item is indisputably incorrect.

The governor's office also claimed some capital program cuts were not cuts, but those numbers weren't included in the total bottom line on the list circulating among legislators.

And, the governor's office again pointed out that even though municipal governments are seeing a decrease in its percentage rake, he's proposing they receive the same amount of money next fiscal year.

But with inflation being what it is, no increase equals a cut.

Pritzker's statement also pointed out the "growing budget cuts from the Trump administration all state budgets are facing across the country."

But the Affordability and Tax Justice Coalition issued a statement in reply that addressed this point:

"We strongly believe that the answer to Trump's cruelty is to find sustainable revenue from the wealthy and big corporations to help us avoid these painful cuts, strengthen Illinois' finances for future fiscal years, and finally begin to fix our unfair tax system."

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

Class of '77 reunion planning

The Wilmington High School class of 1977 is in the process of organizing a 50th year class reunion.

Please contact Vicky (Milton) Weidling if you are interested in attending next year and/or if you have classmate information. Her number is (815) 351-8264. E-mail - vickyweidling@gmail.com or Facebook - Vicky Milton Weidling.

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May 30th 1-4pm

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**Hot Dogs-Burgers-Beef-Gyros**
Custom Cakes-Desserts-Ice Cream
Dine In-Carryout-Delivery

First mosquitoes test positive for West Nile

The Will County Health Department's Environmental Health division announced that the first batch of mosquitoes collected for 2026 have tested positive for West Nile virus [WNV].

Will County residents are reminded to protect themselves from mosquito bites and mosquito-borne diseases.

No human cases of West Nile virus have been reported in Will County so far this year. According to data from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), WNV has

been found in five counties in Illinois in 2026.

There have been no confirmed human cases of WNV in the state so far in 2026.

WNV typically causes mild, flu-like symptoms. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 8 out of 10 people infected with West Nile virus do not develop any symptoms. About 1 in 5 people who are infected develop a fever with other symptoms such as headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash.

Most people who develop symptoms from WNV recover completely, but fatigue and weakness can last for weeks or months.

About 1 in 150 people who are infected develop a severe illness that affects the central nervous system such as inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) or inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord (meningitis).

Severe illness can occur in people of any age, however people over 60 years of age are at greater

risk for severe illness if they are infected. People with certain medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease, and people who have received organ transplants, are also at greater risk.

Because there is no vaccine available to prevent West Nile virus, it is important to avoid mosquito bites.

Remember to "Fight the Bite" by wearing repellent when outdoors, make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens.

MVK Senior citizens hold May meeting

The MVK Senior Citizens met May 19, at noon at the Mazon American Legion building for a lunch catered by Hoffman House through Meals on Wheels for Northern Illinois and the Community Nutrition Network served by Lisa and her volunteers, enjoyed by everyone.

The meeting was opened by President Beth Burns at 12:45 with the Pledge to the Flag and a prayer by Nancy Johnson and a moment of silence.

Secretary Johnson gave her

report and was approved as read. The Treasurer, Shirley Peterson, gave her report and was approved as read. The birthday of Jean Thom was celebrated with singing.

Upcoming events in the area are The Sulphur Springs Gleaners are having a free Senior Bingo and KFC lunch at the Lions Hall in Coal City Saturday, June 14, at noon. Doors open at 11:30.

At our July meeting we will have a speaker to talk about the Mazon Sesquicentennial celebration. CNN

meals that have been offered at the YMCA will be available at Clayton's Tap in Morris for the summer.

Our next meeting will be June 16, and the meal will be free to our members, we will try to have summer BBQ type food.

Door prizes were won by Joyce, LaVonne, and Charlotte. Meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m. At 10:30 a.m. several members enjoyed playing Euchre. After our meeting members enjoyed playing Bingo.

SUNDAY FUNDAY!
DOORS OPEN AT NOON! FIRST RAFFLE AT 2PM!
It's NOT BINGO but a RAFFLE like BINGO... You play it like BINGO!! Lots of cash prizes!!! BIG PRIZES!!!

QUEEN of HEARTS
Every TUESDAY at 553 W. Kennedy Rd. Braidwood
You must play BINGO to participate.
Doors open at 4pm. Drawing is held at intermission.
Queen of Hearts Pot is \$7,375.00
For BINGO players only on Tuesday nites and see the QUEEN rules at the BINGO hall for rules and regulations.

**Braidwood Post 039 BINGO**
Tuesday Night Flash Max Bingo

Pull Tabs	6:30pm	Hot Food, Snacks & Beverages
Bingo	6:30pm	553 Kennedy Road
Doors Open	4:00pm	Braidwood, IL 60408

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The Free Press Newspapers will be responsible for the first incorrect insertion, and its liabilities shall be limited to the price on one insertion. The Free Press Newspapers reserves the right to classify correctly, edit, reject or cancel any advertisement at any time in accordance with its policy. All ads must be checked for errors the first week of publication by the advertiser.

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

Cost
Line Ads are up to 30 words (20¢ for each word over 30)
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3 wks.- \$25; 4 wks.-\$29*
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The Braidwood Journal — The Coal City Courier — The Free Press Advocate



FOR FREE

Free kittens to loving home, 3 males, 1 female. For more information, please text 618-383-5870. fr20-21

GARAGE SALE

Braidwood Garage Sale Days
Fri. & Sat., June 12-13
8AM to 3PM
Get maps at First Presbyterian Church. Main & Lincoln Street. Look for the large shamrock pennants. No rain date. cc20-23

Carbon Hill - Two families. 620 N.1st Street. Friday, May 29 & Sat., May 30, 8:30AM-4PM. Oak roll top desk, antique gun cabinet with glass front. Ladies clothes, shorts, jeans, tops, and coats. Suitcases, snow shovels. Heatseal, HP Photosmart. Fluidity Fitness Evolved. Lots of books. ca21

GARAGE SALE

17th ANNUAL WILMINGTON ALL-TOWN GARAGE SALE
Thurs., June 4 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Fri., June 5 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sat., June 6, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Come out and explore all the great sales throughout the whole town - there will be something for everyone! Listing Maps forms are due by Wednesday, May 27 and are available at Wilmington City Hall, Wilmington Library & Wilmington First United Methodist Church. Maps will be available for pick up only at the First United Methodist Church at 401 E. Kahler Rd., beginning at 8 a.m. on Thursday, June 4 through the entirety of the sale. Please call FUMC at 815-476-5474 with any questions. ch20-22

HOME FOR SALE

Three bedroom, 1 1/2 bath. One car garage. Gardner, IL. 116 N. Center Street. Will sell on contract to qualified buyer. Call 815-237-2635. ca20-23

LOST & FOUND

Have you found a lost pet or lost a pet in Will County? Please call Will County Animal Control. We may have your pet. We want to reunite your family, 815-462-5633.

PETS

Large Selection of Dog and Cat Food, treats, accessories, health aids, clothing, Birthday treats, wall art, jewelry, gifts, greeting cards and Home of Fritters for Critters Pet Treats. New! Brew and Chew Dog Treats. Trinity Barkery 240 W. Baltimore Wilmington., IL 60481 815-476-5104 slewis@trinityservices.org.

SERVICE & REPAIRS

Mike Collins Roofing, re-shingles and gutter cleaning, aluminum gutter screen, no repair to small or too big. Free roof inspection. Low prices. Lic #104.007296 Ask for Mike at 815-730-1303.

GOT GRASS Lawn Care
Jim Baudino
815-342-6394
cc7-23

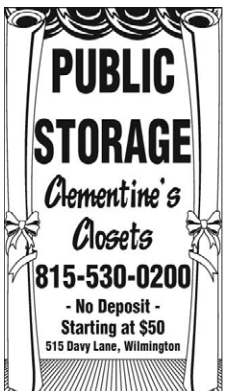
Julie's Remodeling
Siding, soffit, roof repairs, painting, seamless gutters, fencing, tree removal, lawn care. Complete Handyman service! Bonded and Insured, 20 yrs., Call Lee 815-791-5731.

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REAL ESTATE

SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE of **849 Cambridge Court, Wilmington, IL 60481** (Residential). On the **11th** day of **June, 2026** to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **JPMORGAN CHASE BANK, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, Plaintiff V. GREGORY M. FOX; GRUNDY BANK; UNIFUND CCR, LLC; CAPITAL ONE,**

VILLAGE OF COAL CITY PART-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE INTERN

The Village of Coal City is seeking a part-time employee to work as its Administrative Intern. This person will report to the Village Administrator working close with administrative staff and department heads. The Administrative Intern will be responsible for a variety of tasks requiring participation in assigned administrative processes, procedures and programs, in addition to providing information and assistance to the public regarding assigned programs and services.

Candidate must possess a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with major coursework in public administration, business administration, or a related field. This position is intended for a person wishing to continue coursework within public administration. Payment for this position has been set at a starting pay of \$18.00 per hour and will require 20 hours or work per week.

Interested and qualified candidates should apply by submitting a resume and completing an employment application at Village Hall by June 3, 2026.

REAL ESTATE

N.A.; FEDERATED BANK; Defendant. Case No. **25 FC 1108** in the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois. Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lien or acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact: **JOHNSON, BLUMBERG AND ASSOCIATES 30 NORTH LASALLE SUITE 3650 CHICAGO, IL 60602 P: 312 541-9710 F: 312 541-9711** PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. Published in the Free Press Newspapers on May 20, 27, & June 3 2026.

Coal City church needs blood donors

Coal City United Methodist Church, located at 6805 E. McArdle Road, will hold a Community Blood Drive in their fellowship hall with Versiti Blood Center on Tuesday, June 2, from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Register for a preferred time online at Versiti.org/il or contact Karen Hart at 708-217-5808. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are recommended.

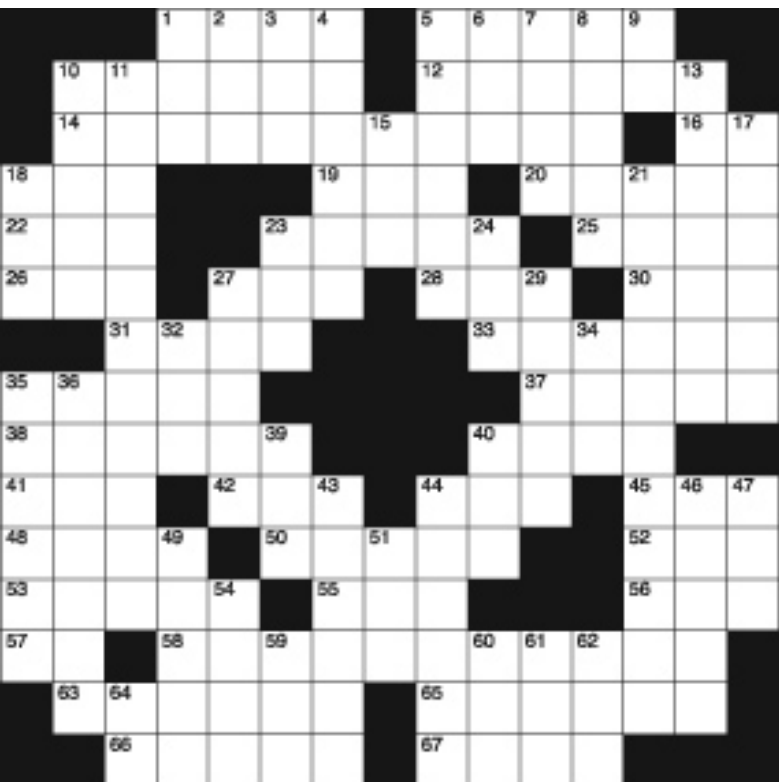
Be sure to bring a photo ID, drink plenty of water, and eat a healthy meal before donating. Please consider donating blood and help save a life!

REAL ESTATE

SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE of **1101 N. Joliet Street, Wilmington, IL 60481** (Residential). On the **4th** day of **June, 2026** to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **ROCKET MORTGAGE, LLC F/K/A QUICKEN LOANS, LLC F/K/A QUICKEN LOANS INC., Plaintiff V. KILEY BARR; MATTHEW TAYLOR; UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, ACTING THROUGH THE RURAL HOUSING SERVICE;** Defendant. Case No. **24 FC 0260** in the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois. Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact: **THE WIRBICKI LAW GROUP 33 W. Monroe St. Suite 1540 Chicago, Illinois 60603 P: 312-360-9455 F** PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. Published in the Free Press Newspapers on Wednesdays, May 20, 27, and June 3, 2026.

REAL ESTATE

SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE of **106 Round House Street, Braidwood, IL 60408** (SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL). On the **11th** day of **June, 2026** to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **PHH Mortgage Corporation Plaintiff V. Karlee Cox a/k/a K. Cox; Madison Mason a/k/a M. Mason; Unknown Owners and Non Record Claimants;** Defendant. Case No. **25 FC 0331** in the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois. Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact: **THE WIRBICKI LAW GROUP 33 W. Monroe St. Suite 1540 Chicago, Illinois 60603 P: 312-360-9455 F** PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. Published in the Free Press Newspapers on Wednesdays, May 20, 27, and June 3, 2026.

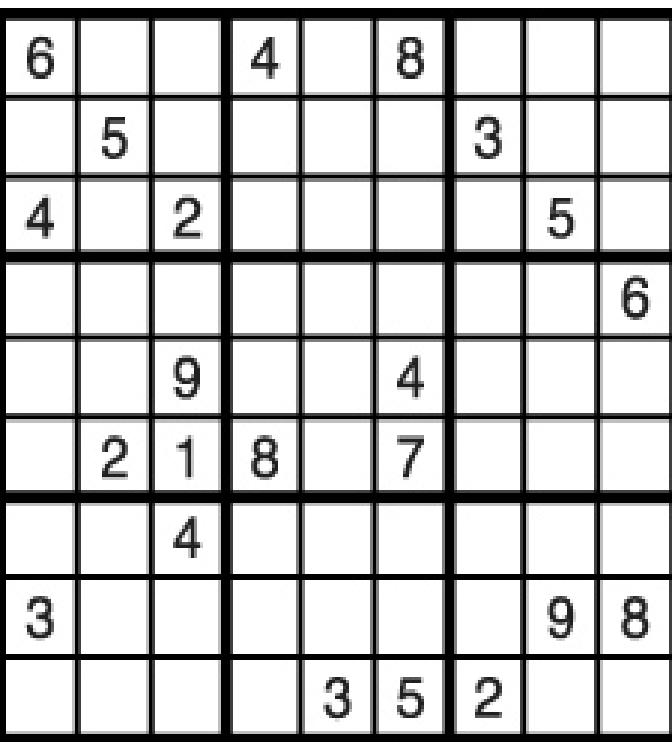


CLUES ACROSS

1. Streetcar
5. Take ___ of it!
10. SW Asia peninsula
12. Beating wings to escape from a perch
14. One who revitalizes
16. Indicates position
18. Dishonorable man
19. Singer King Cole
20. Short-tailed marten
22. One point east (clockwise) of due north
23. The god of the underworld in ancient mythology
25. Dirt
26. Superconducting super collider
27. Not good

CLUES DOWN

1. Children's game
2. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
3. Own (Scottish)
4. Female follower of Bacchus
5. Subsidies
6. Protects from weather
7. Spanish municipality
8. Supermarket chain
9. Domain name
10. Semitic peoples
11. Designs anew
13. City associated with Jesus
15. Cool!
17. Bank employee
18. Central nervous system
21. Standardized piece of text
23. A type of fever
24. Baglike structure in a plant or animal
27. Threaten persistently
29. Aspirations
32. Baby's eating accessory
34. Actress Thurman
35. Turn into bone
36. One who saves you
39. Consume
40. Swiss river
43. A part of a river where the current is very fast
44. Categories
46. Expressed amazement
47. It's important in respiration (abbr.)
49. Greek war dance
51. Bland, semi-liquid food
54. Regard in a specified way
59. Taxi
60. Naturally occurring solid material
61. Feline
62. Post-burning residue
64. Elevated railroad



COMET SPORTS

Comets stun Seneca, advance to semifinal

The Reed-Custer baseball team kept their season alive Monday with a post-season upset, knocking off No. 7-seeded Seneca 6-2 in the opening round of the regional tournament.

The victory sends the 10th-seeded Comets into Thursday's regional semifinal against No. 2-seeded Coal City at 3 p.m. in Seneca. With another upset, Reed-Custer would advance to Saturday's regional championship game at 11 a.m.

For a team that entered the postseason with a 6-24 record, Monday's win provided a major boost and showed the Comets are still capable of making noise in the postseason.

Alejandro Fierro led the way both on the mound and at the plate. The junior tossed a complete game, allowing just three hits and two earned runs while striking out four to earn the win.

At the plate, Chase Isaac sparked the offense with three hits, while Fierro added two hits of his own. Cole Yeates and Dhane Debelak each drove in two runs for the Comets, and Kaiden Klein also contributed a hit.

Reed-Custer came out swining, scoring four runs their first turn at bat. After adding a lone run in the top of the second, the Comets settled in behind Fierro before adding an insurance run in the sixth which wasn't need.

Defensively, Reed-Custer backed its ace with a solid effort in the field and timely hitting throughout the lineup.

Now the Comets turn their attention to rival Coal City, one of the top seeds in the sectional. The Coalers defeated the Comets twice during the regular season but Reed-Custer will look to carry Monday's momentum into another challenging postseason matchup.

The Reed-Custer Comets picked up a late-season victory before heading into regional play, defeating Grant Park 4-2 after dropping a tough contest to Sandwich earlier in the week.

The Comets bounced back Thursday behind a strong pitching effort and timely hitting to earn the 4-2 victory over Grant Park.

Isaiah Aguilar earned the win on the mound, allowing two runs over five innings while striking out seven. Dhane Debelak

closed the door with two scoreless innings of relief, surrendering just one hit while striking out two.

Christian Mounts sparked the offense with a perfect 4-for-4 performance, while Alejandro Fierro added two hits and an RBI. Jeffrey Wolford drove in a run, and Chase Isaac and Jon Doran each scored for the Comets.

Reed-Custer took control with a pair of runs in the third inning before adding insurance late to secure the victory.

Earlier in the week, the Comets fell 7-4 to Sandwich despite collecting seven hits.

Thomas Emery provided the biggest offensive highlight, blasting a three-run home run while finishing with two hits and three RBIs. Kaiden Klein added a pair of hits, and Alejandro Fierro doubled and drove in a run.

Sandwich rallied with a four-run fourth inning and added three more runs over the next two frames to pull away.

Jeffrey Wolford started on the mound for Reed-Custer, while Emery pitched in relief.



Photo by Amy Walker

REED-CUSTER'S ALEJANDRO FIERRO throws a pitch against Coal City.

Young Comets see promising season end against Seneca

The Reed-Custer Comets saw its softball season come to an end Tuesday night with a 10-0 loss to No. 2-seeded Seneca in regional play.

Despite the defeat, the Comets closed the season with a strong 15-11 record and will return their entire roster next season with no seniors graduating.

Seneca broke open a close game with an eight-run third inning after the teams played scoreless softball through the first two frames. The Fighting Irish added two more runs in the fourth to end the game early.

Reed-Custer was limited to one hit offensively, a double by Mackenzie Foote. The Comets battled throughout against a Seneca squad that entered the postseason as one of the area's top seeds.

Sophia Moyers started in the circle for Reed-Custer, working 2 2/3 innings while allowing five hits and eight runs, though none of the runs were earned. Adalyn Steichen pitched in relief and gave up two runs over the final inning.

Seneca collected nine hits in the win, led by Lexie Buis and Tessa Krull with two hits each. Aurora Weber added two RBIs for the Fighting Irish.

While the regional loss brought the season to a close, the future appears bright for the Comets. Reed-Custer's young roster gained valuable experience throughout the season, finishing with a winning record and positioning the program for continued success next spring with every player expected to return.



Photo by Amy Walker

ON THE RUN and aiming for first base is Lady Comet Mackenzie Foote.



Photo by Amy Walker

MAKING CONTACT at the plate for the Comets is Isaiah Aguilar.



Photo by Amy Walker

COVERING FIRST BASE during an attempt to get the baserunner out is Reed-Custer's Adalyn Steichen.



Photo by Amy Walker

IN THE CIRCLE for the Lady Comets is Sophia Moyers.

COMET SPORTS



6TH PLACE

STATE PLACER

ALYSSA WOLLENZIEN
REED-CUSTER TRACK & FIELD
100M HURDLES | 15.34



12TH PLACE

STATE PLACER

KATIE LANTKA
REED-CUSTER TRACK & FIELD
POLE VAULT | 9'10"

Comets' postseason run ends in regional title match

The Reed-Custer Comets saw a successful postseason run come to an end Friday night as Herscher defeated the Comets 3-1 in the regional championship match.

Reed-Custer finished the season with a strong 9-7-1 record after advancing to the title game with an

impressive semifinal victory earlier in the week.

The Tigers jumped out quickly in Friday's championship contest, scoring all three of their goals in the first half before the Comets settled in defensively during the final 40 minutes.

Reed-Custer managed a second-half goal but

could not complete a comeback against a Herscher squad that controlled the early momentum.

Despite the loss, the Comets had plenty to celebrate after reaching the regional final on their home field.

Reed-Custer earned its championship game berth Tuesday with a 3-1 victory over Bishop McNamara in the semifinal round.

After a scoreless first half, the Comets erupted offensively after halftime behind standout performances from Gwen Stewart and K. Poole-Crites.

Stewart scored twice for Reed-Custer, while freshman K. Poole-Crites added another goal. Hailey Compton helped orchestrate the attack with two assists.

The Comets' defense also came through in the victory, limiting Bishop McNamara to one goal while goalkeeper Harlie Lieberman recorded two saves.

The postseason run highlighted the growth of the program and featured strong contributions from both veteran leaders and younger players. Stewart capped her season with another standout performance in the semifinal, while Compton and Poole-Crites showed the Comets have a solid foundation returning for next season.

Although the season ended one win shy of a regional title, Reed-Custer finished above .500 and closed the year playing some of its best soccer of the season.



Photo by Eric Fisher

LADY COMET Hailey Compton keeps the ball moving during a win over Bishop McNamara.

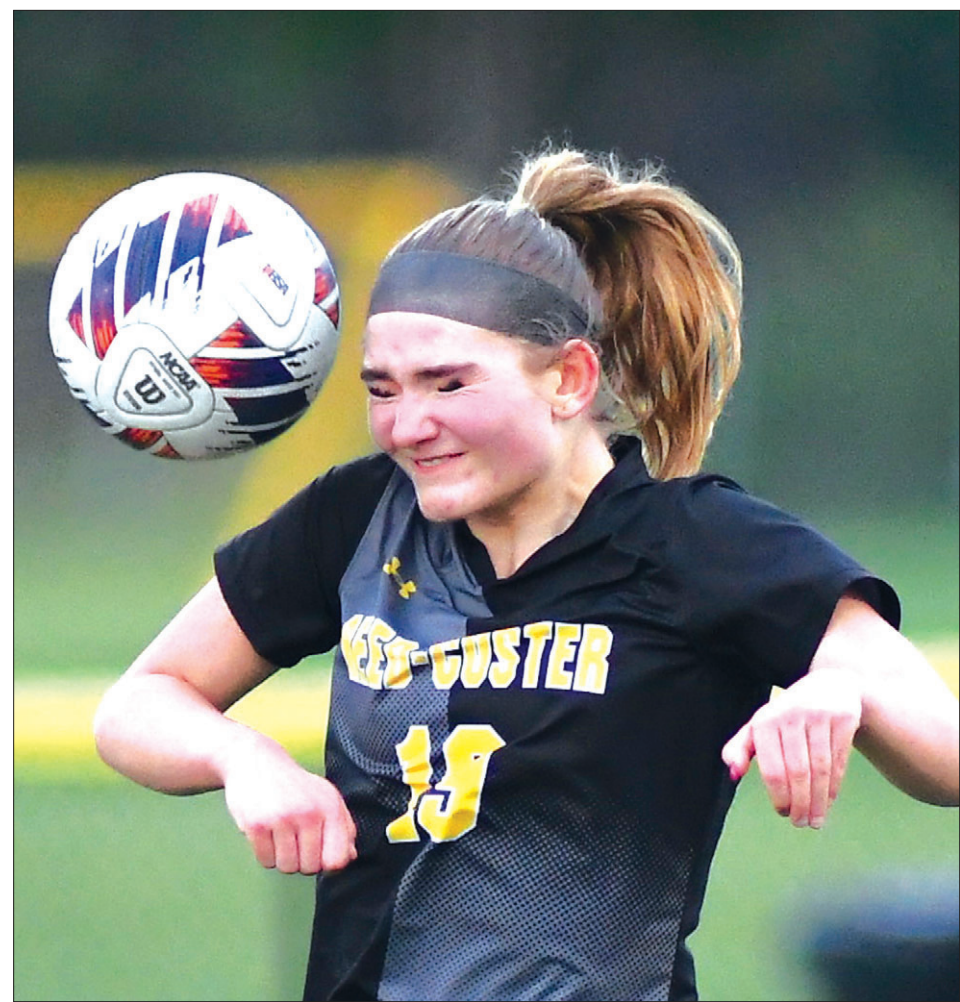


Photo by Eric Fisher

HEADS UP PLAY—Reed-Custer's Nicole Trulock heads the ball that was on a high bounce during Tuesday's regional win over Bishop McNamara.



Photo by Eric Fisher

STOPPING TO REVERSE the ball in the opposite direction last week is April Fierro.



Photo by Eric Fisher

REED-CUSTER SENIOR Jayden Brodinski makes a short kick to feed the ball to a teammate during regional action on Tuesday.