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No agreement yet between Braidwood, Custer fire districts

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

Plans for the Custer Fire Protection District (CFPD) and Braidwood Fire Protection District (BFPD) to enter into an agreement over services have not been scrapped. But, the districts will not meet the Aug. 1 deadline that had originally been included as a hopeful start date to that agreement.

The two districts have been in talks for the last several months about a potential Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), which would turn over Custer's fire and ambulance services to Braidwood.

CFPD currently has fire protection services, but its ambulance service is not yet certified by the Illinois Department of Public Health for

transport. The ambulance is currently operational as a response vehicle for medical emergencies, however, the districts must rely on other districts for transporting patients.

Custer reached out to several districts seeking out an IGA, finally working on an agreement with Braidwood where Custer's fire board would remain intact, but the bulk of the district's assets would be liquidated and those funds turned over to Braidwood. Under the agreement, Custer would also transfer all of its tax revenue to Braidwood for operations, while Braidwood would keep the fire house, the ambulance, and staff the Custer Park fire house with at least two paramedics. Fire and ambulance protection in Custer Township would then become Braidwood's responsibility.

The IGA is currently still in draft form. But while the intention initially was to officially turn services over to Braidwood next month, the board was unable to consider the agreement this month, in part because the CFPD board is no longer full.

CFPD held its regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, just two days after the well attended Town Hall meeting held on Monday, July 17. During that meeting, Treasurer Andy Kooistra resigned as a commissioner, due to residency issues. However, a second trustee, Mike Newbrough, left the meeting, although Newbrough did not officially resign his post.

Even if the draft IGA was ready for a vote, one cannot be taken until the board, which is appointed by the Custer Township board, once again has five sworn members.

While the vote did not take place, there was spirited discussion over the IGA. Some residents in attendance at Wednesday's meeting objected to the terminology that there is a "hostile takeover" by Braidwood, noting that Custer was the district that initiated the conversations late last year.

Several residents expressed the same concerns that were voiced during the town hall meeting, several arguing that they are no longer okay with waiting for Custer to finally have a transport ambulance and additional staffing for responding to local emergencies.

Some citizens also noted that the tax rate in Custer Township is about 33% higher for fire protection than the people of Braidwood, but the services are not the same. Those residents said folks in Custer Park were

on board with reopening the station four years ago, but due to the limited funds and the issues after the pandemic, it seems like the best option is to move to Braidwood.

CFPD board president Ron Pruss said he was frustrated that the IGA seems to have prompted such a divisive response from the community.

"This is about improving service to our community. It's a win-win. I don't understand," Pruss said. "You win either way. If Custer is able to stand up on its own again, and get a transport license and keep the station staffed, that's a win. If Braidwood wants to take it over and put two people in our station and staff an ambulance, that's a win. Yet, there's all this fighting going on."

SEE FIRE, PAGE 2

Braidwood is Hometown Proud



Courtesy photo

THAT'S OUR GRANDPA! Braidwood Lions volunteer Rich Bieda was this year's Summerfest Hometown Proud Parade Grand Marshal. And this year, the whole family got into the spirit, with Bieda's grandchildren each sporting a "My Grandpa is the Summerfest Grand Marshal but all I got was this lousy tee shirt" shirts! Bieda and his wife Ellen rode in the parade on Sunday, July 16, the last day of this year's festival. Bieda was chosen as grand marshal thanks to his dedication and service to the Braidwood community as well as to the Lions Club. Check out all of our Summerfest photos in this edition on pages 2, 13, and 14.



Courtesy photo

A HELPING HAND – The Reed-Custer School District made a donation to Braidwood ESDA during this month's regular meeting of the board of education. On hand for the check presentation were (from left) R-C Superintendent Mark Mitchell, ESDA Asst. Coordinator Mike Compton, ESDA Coordinator Josh Bolatto, and R-C Board of Education President Greg Boyer.

Reed-Custer gives an assist to ESDA

STAFF REPORT

The City of Braidwood's Emergency Service Disaster Agency (ESDA) got a financial boost recently thanks to a donation from the Reed-Custer School District.

During the July 19 regular meeting of the board of education, Superintendent Mark Mitchell and Board President Greg Boyer presented ESDA Coordinator Josh Bolatto and Assistant Coordinator Mike

Compton with a \$5,000 donation to be used towards the purchase of equipment for ESDA's services.

"We greatly appreciate the partnership and support services that Braidwood ESDA has given to the School District over the years," Boyer said. "From assisting during events, to working on disaster pre-planning with our other first

SEE ESDA, PAGE 3

Gaming dollars continue to rise

BY ANN GILL
STAFF EDITOR

Over \$5.6 billion has been fed into video gaming machines across Illinois since the first six months of this year.

That's equivalent to 11% of the state's fiscal year 2024 budget.

Since the first video terminals went live in 2012, Illinois had collected over \$4.1 billion in gaming taxes and another \$762 million has been distributed to the counties and municipalities where gaming is allowed.

At the mid-year mark, the Illinois Gaming Board (IGB) reports the state has collected over \$420 million this year, an increase of over 8.2% from the prior year.

The portion of the net terminal income collected by the state that goes back to the municipalities so far this year

SEE GAMING, PAGE 3



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Fire

Pruss noted at the town hall meeting that even if CFPD raises taxes to the highest amount allowed by taxing limits, the district still would not collect enough funds to fully cover what it costs to operate for a year.

Pruss also said he just wants everybody to put the best interests of Custer Township residents first.

“Let’s just lower the temperature. There is no reason for this to be as tenuous as it is,” Pruss said. “I never wanted this to be a split vote. I was hoping that we as a board would come together, work together.”

But board member Kathy Anton said she is already fighting for what she sees is the best interest of the people of Custer Township.

“There are things in [the

IGA] right now, one page says they’re going to give us two firefighters [at the firehouse] and on another page it says they’re only going to give us one. Which one is it?” she said.

Anton also expressed concern that, should either district want to opt out of the IGA, Custer, having liquidated all of its assets, would not be able to restart their own fire district.

During the town hall meeting, Braidwood’s Deputy Chief Mike Pemble said Braidwood currently has five firefighter/EMTs or firefighter/paramedics on duty in Braidwood at any given time. Pemble said the intention would be to add a sixth person to the 24/7 schedule, and keep two people at the Custer station at all times, with four in Braidwood.

The most recent copy of the draft ordinance states that if Braidwood terminated the agreement for reasons other than cause or non-payment,

“Braidwood agrees to repay to Custer the agreed amount of Custer’s assets” as detailed in the agreement, however, the worth of Custer’s assets has not yet been determined.

The CFPD board is appointed by the Custer Township Board of Trustees, who will now have to appoint at least one new member before a vote can be taken on the IGA. The board is expected to make that appointment in August, although it was not immediately clear if that would be done during a special meeting or the regular monthly meeting.

In the meantime, CFPD has made a copy of the IGA available on its website.

The IGA reads in part:

(A) Braidwood will provide qualified personnel and equipment to provide fire and emergency ambulance services to residents and properties of Custer.

(B) Braidwood will, to the best of its ability and as rea-

sonably and operationally practicable, provide such services on the same basis as it provides its services to residents and properties within its corporate limits.

(C) Braidwood will provide to the residents of Custer the same public education and fire safety programs which are available to Braidwood residents.

(D) Braidwood shall make regular and routine reports when requested, but typically not less than a quarterly basis, to Custer of its activities, including any significant or noteworthy service-related event occurring in Custer’s territory.

(E) Braidwood will make reasonable effort to secure Automatic Aid for Custer from other fire departments and fire districts. Mutual Aid will be provided through agreements with MABAS divisions, or such successors as Braidwood may choose from time to time, including an

auto aid an agreement with Salina Fire Protection District and an auto aid engine to the southeast beat of Custer’s territory.

Per the draft agreement, compensation will include the balance of Custer’s Corporate and Ambulance Fund to Braidwood, and 100% of Custer’s actual real estate taxes deposits less the sum paid by Custer for Board and corporate expenses for the length of the IGA.

Custer’s residents shall be considered as “residents” by Braidwood, and Braidwood promises it will not “hard bill” Custer’s residents during the duration of the Agreement.

Custer will liquidate all tangible assets including apparatus and portable fire protection equipment no later than one year from the start of the IGA, and convey to Braidwood the title of Ambulance 29 and all onboard/surplus EMS equipment.

Per the draft, “the parties acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Custer’s employees. The Parties further acknowledge that Braidwood’s full-time, paid firefighters must be appointed via the original appointment process prescribed by law... The Parties agree that Braidwood lacks the power to hire Custer’s employees as full-time, commissioned firefighters without them undergoing the aforesaid original appointment process. Nevertheless, following the execution of this Agreement, Braidwood shall make reasonable and good faith efforts to hire Custer’s employees as non-commissioned, part-time firefighters. The Parties will meet and confer in good faith as to Braidwood’s hiring of said individuals.”

The full text of the draft can be found on CFPD website, www.custerfpd.org.

Memories of the 42nd Annual Braidwood Lions Summerfest



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Overlay is senseless

SHADOW LAKES—I read in your July 12th edition the article titled "Long awaited road projects coming to Will County." In the article it states, "The OVERLAY of Coal City Road from I-55 to Route 53." Isn't the word OVERLAY another term for repave? I have lived here nine years and that road has been overlaid maybe four times. That road needs to be completely stripped down to the dirt, tamped, tamped again and done right. It is not the contractor's fault that it does not last. They do what they are paid to do. Brian

Consolidate fire districts

BRAIDWOOD/CUSTER PARK—In regards to the town hall meeting between the Braidwood and Custer Fire districts. The Custer Park board of trustees were unable to answer any questions effectively and danced around topics as much as they could. The Custer Fire district trustees would rather their citizens suffer and hang on to a bunch of "what-if's" than to allow Braidwood to provide the services that the citizens of Custer Park deserve. The Custer Fire district admitted that even if they raise their taxes as high as they are allowed too under law, that they will be unable to provide and guarantee service moving forward. They also admitted to paying their EMT's \$13.75 an hour after initially stating they pay \$16 earlier in the meeting. Which is in violation of state law regarding minimum wage. The service Braidwood can provide to Custer Park can never be matched by Custer Park alone. Support the IGA and push for a full consolidation of the Custer Fire District into the Braidwood Fire District. A consolidation will actually lower your taxes and greatly improve your service with full-time highly trained firefighter/paramedics. This is about you and your families. Make the right choice.

Critical thinking

WILMINGTON—I miss low gas prices, very low inflation, rising employment and no war in Ukraine. These benefits and more were due to the efforts of President Trump and his administration. I am hoping and praying for his return this next election for the good of America. Don't like Trump's New York style? How about his policies? There is truth and there is spin. Think critically.

Our own land

COAL CITY—In last week's Coal City Courant the headline story is about a non-compliance shed being built. First of all this is rural America, not downtown Chicago as people in authority seem to think. We purchase our properties and pay high taxes, but then can't do what we want on our own land. There are so many sheds and fences being put up without getting building permits and yes I realize you are supposed to get them. While I am talking about that, we were in the 2015 tornado and had to get a permit to replace a garage that was destroyed. Talk about kick someone when they are down. Maybe the man with the shed should ask the owner of the old skating rink how to get approved to be turned into apartments, that neighbors opposed. The parking lot lights are so bright there and shine in the neighboring house's windows all night. Then there's the approval for the apartment buildings at the corner of Kankakee and Blackstone streets, that definitely don't meet the lot line setbacks. A couple years back the city received government money to fix up 10 properties within a certain area of town. One of the houses was just north of the approved section of town, but the lady that lives there got approved because she knew someone. The contractor that got all the repair jobs was related at the time. I have lived here my whole life and it only seems to get worse.

See you in court

WILMINGTON—Everyone complains about the hazy skies due to distant forest fires, but nothing can be done. Fortunately, the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed by the Biden administration provides clean transportation solutions making huge wins for the economy, clean air and our climate. In contrast, remember when former President Trump cut 125 EPA regulations? As a result, the greatest sockeye salmon run in the world, Bristol Bay, was threatened by a massive mining operation. Trump's EPA was taken to court and now Bristol Bay, Alaska is now safe from the polluters. Thank you, President Biden. Irene

A new low

WILMINGTON—I saw the co-founder of Mom's For Liberty was moaning that reading scores are at a new low in this country. But to be fair it's hard to read a book that is burning.

Kiss everything good-bye

COAL CITY—There is a law that the gover-

nor of Illinois is going to sign which is house bill 3751 that will authorize people in the U.S.A. illegally to become police officers in Illinois. That means people here illegally will have the legal right to arrest anyone for any crime they please. This bill was passed by the Illinois General Assembly even though federal law prohibits non American citizens from working in law enforcement. Thank you to all the Democrat voters. Our governor has just stuck it to you. Just think what will happen in this country if the governor of Illinois or California become the president. If you think you have money problems now just keep voting the Democrats into power and kiss everything good-bye. Does any Democrat public servant care about the laws of the U.S.A. or the American citizens lives.

Verge of WWII

COAL CITY—I hope all you liberal, Democrat, Biden lovers are happy. We're weeks to months from WWII on three different fronts, and main stream news media could care less! Russia could escalate their war any day, and drag the rest of the world into it. China is getting ready to invade Taiwan any day now knowing brain-dead Biden won't do anything about it! Or crazy Iran and South Korea, one shooting missiles all over the place, the other attacking ships in the Strait of Hormuz. None of which would be happening right now if someone else had won the 2020 election. On another note, the Biden crime family should all be indicted and charged with treason and corruption for taking millions from foreign countries, namely China and Ukraine. Lastly, it pays to be a criminal. New York is getting ready to pay demonstrators/ protesters (really rioters) who got arrested \$10,000 each. Also our great governor Pritzker just got his wish for no cash bail! Hope you're all happy! KL

Political diversion

WILMINGTON—Why is it when politicians break the law or are accused of breaking the law, they always scream that it is political, but you and I would be sitting in a cell waiting for our trial date for doing a lot less?

Humans in danger

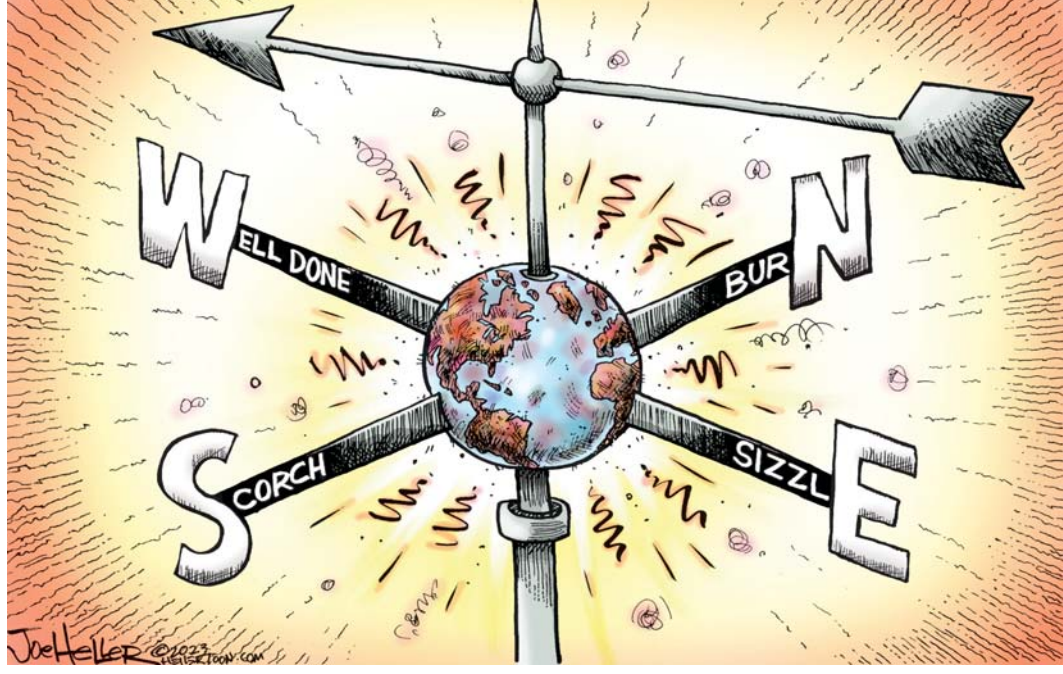
BRAIDWOOD—The year was 2011 and I'll never forget it. Monarch butterflies were in such abundance, they often hovered around my open door as if they wanted to come in for a visit. I suspected that I would never experience such beauty in future years. I was right. Monarchs have been dwindling and I've hardly seen any this year at all. How can we be so apathetic to life around us without realizing that humans are in danger also? Much of the blame for earth's dysfunction lies at the feet of politicians, specifically the Republican Party. From refusal to take action on climate issues to cutting flora and fauna from the Endangered Species List, that's the GOP platform. But the kicker is that polls indicate most Republicans definitely support earth's harmony. Bigshot Republicans, not so much or not at all. Colleen

No more 'what ifs'

BRAIDWOOD/CUSTER PARK—The Custer Park Fire District is claiming they have full time staffing and have been providing it for a while. In the last year and a half, Custer Park hasn't responded to even 22% of their calls including the double fatal crash on Rt. 113 in March of this year, which was handled exclusively by Braidwood with assistance from Wilmington and Limestone. This was the biggest most publicized emergency event since the Custer Fire District re-opened its doors and they didn't even show up. Out of the 17 members on the Custer Park staff, only six of them are actual certified and trained firefighters. Braidwood is a no brainer for coverage with its roster of 48 members, all of which are required to, or are already certified firefighters, paramedics, and EMTs. Braidwood provides full time coverage 24/7, 365, not to mention the specialty teams, the equipment, and the level of training Braidwood has in comparison. I'm not even sure why this is a discussion. When it comes to my life, I want the best showing up at my door. No more "Just hang in there" and "what if's" Custer Park trustees. Do the right thing for the people you are supposed to serve. Braidwood IGA all the way.

Cult of chaos

GARDNER—This is for the guy from Wilmington who loves Trump and wants him back. Gas price are getting better depending on where you live, but we have to deal with Trump's buddies in Saudi Arabia, who gave and are still giving him and his son-in-law billions of dollars by the way, who cause the price hikes by cutting distribution. Plus, big oil companies keep price gouging. Gas prices are about supply and demand. It was cheaper during the pandemic because no one was going to work. No demand. The more we need gas, the higher the prices. It takes time to get back from the mess that your guy made a lot worse where over 500,000 more people died than should have. Biden has raised employment more than any other president in history along with the lowest unemployment in years. The reason we're in Ukraine is because Putin thought Trump weakened NATO. Little did he know that NATO is strong, thanks to Biden, and instead of being able to destroy other countries, he actually has made NATO stronger with two new members. Now the war criminal is bidding his time murdering innocent women and children, hoping he can interfere with the next election and get Trump elected again so he can take over that country along with ours. Those people are fighting for their democracy while we take ours for granted or complain about it. Trump is owned by Putin because of his beauty pageants held over there years ago so he could launder money for him. No



matter how much Republicans gerrymander, suppress the vote and cheat, it isn't going to happen. The minority can never be in control of the majority again. Good has to win out. It's sad but there is only one political party in this country doing anything for the people of this country. Republicans are no longer the party of law and order. No matter what he does, they're too scared to stand up and say it's wrong. It's a cult of chaos, destruction, and as he says retribution for him. No one is coming for "his people" but him, but if he says it enough times, you believe it. He has committed so many crimes, he needs to be held accountable finally. Let reality set in and realize you don't have to be a follower of a twice impeached, twice indicted +, liable for molesting a woman ex-president who has tried to destroy this country and will keep trying until the day he dies to stay out of jail. I also like the part about his policies if you don't like his New York style. That style was committing crimes for as long as anyone can remember. Six times bankrupt. Go to court and stall. Sound familiar? The guy from Wilmington is right on one thing, though. There is truth and there is spin. The spin is called projection and they do it so well. God help us all. Vote.

Concerned resident

CUSTER TOWNSHIP—Hopefully, Braidwood residents and the Braidwood Fire District know that not everyone in Custer Township feels the same way a few outspoken individuals feel. I cannot speak for everyone, but I do know that a lot of residents do want the Intergovernmental Agreement with Braidwood. Braidwood Fire District has been supportive to Custer Park for years. I do understand how hard it is for the Custer Park Fire District. They have worked extremely hard and spent numerous hours to get the fire department up and running, but even if they get the permit to run an ambulance will they have the money and personnel to keep it running? Braidwood Fire District is giving Custer Park a fantastic opportunity here. A chance to have a paramedic, EMT, and ambulance on duty 24 hours a day, without raising our taxes. What is going to happen if Braidwood Fire District no longer continues to help us? They do not have to. We may never get this opportunity again. Please let your fire and township trustees know if you are in favor of the Intergovernmental Agreement. Your opinion should count too. The vote the Custer Fire District makes will affect you and your family.

Being tried again

GARDNER—I thought I knew a lot about the Holocaust until I watched one of the PBS documentaries on the subject last night. It was so scary how those same things that brought Hitler to power are being tried in this country by Trump and his cronies. If his supporters knew half of what would happen if he gets in office again, they would think twice about how they vote. He already said all he needs is for them to vote for him one more time and then he doesn't need them anymore. They will not have their precious guns, they will not have the freedom of speech, and they will not have any of the other freedoms this democracy gives them. They need to think twice about it or maybe go to Russia or one of the other autocratic countries for a while and see how they like it. I'll take Democracy and will fight for it. God bless America and God bless our troops. We can do better. Vote.

Switching sides

CUSTER PARK—I went to the Custer Town Hall meeting on Monday night and there is a lot to be said about what happened, but nothing beats one of the members of the Custer Fire Board deciding it was best to go over and sit with Braidwood. Buddy, there is nothing at all that night that divided our township more than that move. We obviously know where you stand. What an embarrassment to Custer Park. You were there to represent your town's people, not sit with the opposing side right or wrong. You no longer deserve to be on that board.

Meeting at CP

CUSTER PARK—I was able to attend the town meeting in Custer Park on Monday night. I noticed that the chief from Braidwood Fire talked almost the entire time and was able to answer all questions from "his point of view" while Custer's Chief looked unenthused and didn't say much. For someone who is supposed to be for your squad and fight for your station as if it were your own, you may as well have not shown up. You said that night that you were trying to remain impartial. Well heck, what do we need you for if you aren't in the fight for and with us? Bad stance to take, maybe retire and let one of your younger people take over who still have some fight left in them.

Without representation

CUSTER PARK—The taxpayers voted a few years ago and won in a referendum to have our taxes given to the Custer Fire Department for fire services. According to this new deal with Braidwood, they are going to sell all of the taxpayers' fire station equipment and trucks, etc.

Braidwood gets to keep that money that we pretty much purchased ourselves through our taxes over the last couple years. On top of that, once they have all of our tax dollars and our equipment, we have no say what happens here. Isn't that taxation without representation? It was asked at the meeting if we could have a representative on their board to keep it all honest and they said no. It was also asked if we, the taxpayers, get to vote how we feel on this and it was stated that we do not get to vote. The board of five people can make that decision for us. I am asking how this is possible? If we made the referendum don't we have to "unmake" it? Don't we get the money back for what we put into it? Braidwood stated they get millions of dollars in taxes, why are "giving" everything away?

Interim city clerk

BRAIDWOOD—I saw on this week's agenda the appointment of an interim city clerk who is currently an employee in the city clerk's office. Is the employee qualified to fill this position? Qualified meaning a college degree in business, a certified clerk or a registered clerk through the municipal clerks of Illinois Organization that takes many years of school and seminars to achieve. A qualified city clerk is to stay in the position until another qualified person is found. There was an individual that interviewed for this position and had the most qualifications and was willing to work part-time but unfortunately the administrator doesn't like this individual and he would make sure this same individual would never work in city hall although qualified. And there was another individual that interviewed that was more qualified but needed a full-time position not part-time. So seeing the agenda I'm assuming that this is now going to be full-time other than the part-time position that was previously advertised in the Braidwood Journal. Now if a full-time employee is being offered the city clerk's position the city should have ran another ad in the paper accepting applicants for full-time or contacted some of the previous interviewer who didn't want part-time showing you truly are being transparent. So I ask the administrator and the current administration how are you being transparent with this?

A danger zone

MORRIS—It's Monday, July 24, 2 p.m. I just came from Morris going south over the river bridge to Pine Bluff Road and there is a terrible accident there right by Pine Bluff Road and Rt. 47. Why don't the County Sheriffs and Morris Police Department patrol that area and cut down on speeders? They are driving like crazy coming over the river bridge going down to Pine Bluff Road. It has been going on for a long time and it's getting worse. They travel like idiots and the sheriff's department and the Morris Police Department should have more patrols between Pine Bluff Road and the river bridge going into Morris in all lanes.

Did you know?

DIAMOND—Did you know that America has enough oil to fuel every car in the U.S. for 430 years? Did you know that our nation has enough natural gas to light homes and businesses for 575 years? Did you know that the country we love has more than enough recoverable coal within our borders to light, heat and cool America for 500 years or more? Sharon

For justice

DIAMOND—FYI-Just one man standing up for justice is a majority. By Thomas Jefferson

Biden's death tax

DIAMOND—You may remember that we completely eliminated the death tax during the George W. Bush administration but Barack Obama brought it back. Now Joe Biden is pushing to expand the number of people hit in a time of grieving with his new death tax gimmick. The current "Death Tax" is a punishing tax levied on a person's entire estate when they pass away. Biden's scheme involves a tricky little accounting gimmick called the "step-up in basis." Here's an example. Let's say you bought your home a number of years ago and it has gone up in value since then. Under current law if you were to pass away and leave the home to your family they would take possession of the home at current market value and not pay any taxes on appreciation over the years. That's what's called "step-up in basis." Instead, if Biden gets his way, you pass that home onto your loved ones they would owe on the difference between the current value and the original purchase price. If homeowners have owned their home for a long time that could be a hefty tax bill. Many families will be forced to sell their family home just to pay the IRS in the midst of grieving the loss of a loved one. That's just plain cruel if you ask me. Please call your representatives and your senators and tell them to vote no on this new Death Tax Proposal if they want your vote. Call Representative Darin LaHood 1(202)225-6201. Call Senators: Tammy Duckworth 1(202)-224-2854, Richard Durbin 1(202)-224-2152.



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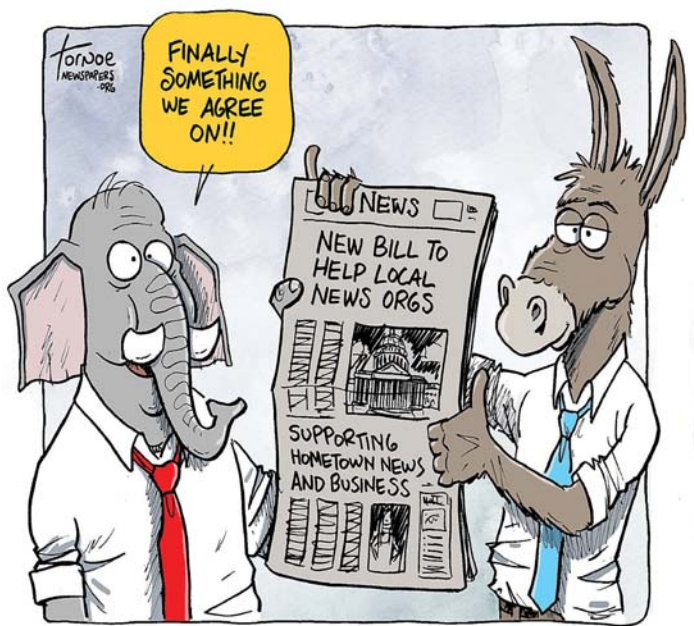
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Commentary

Local news is good for business

BY DEAN RIDINGS

It's no secret that recent years have been tough on small businesses and on newspapers.

A bipartisan bill, the Community News & Small Business Support Act, that has been introduced in Congress would offer relief to both newspapers and local businesses. For too many newspapers, help can't come soon enough.

Economic challenges have resulted in too many communities seeing their local newspapers being forced to lay off staff, cut back on publication days or — worse yet — close. On average, two newspapers are closing each week.

That hurts local businesses and residents in the long (and short) run. However, despite the challenges, what remains true is that local newspapers make a difference in their communities.

But, don't just take my word for it. Let's look at the numbers and why America's Newspapers has been pushing for the Community News & Small Business Support Act to be introduced.

A recent national study of 5,000 Americans over the age of 18 was conducted by the independent research firm Coda Ventures for America's Newspapers, and provides compelling evidence of the importance, relevance and vitality of today's newspapers in the American media landscape.

Readers told us that their local newspaper makes a difference. The study shows that 79 percent of Americans read/use local news "to stay informed" about their cities, counties and communities.

They also said they rely on their local paper to feel connected to their community, to decide where they stand on local issues, to find places and things to do, to talk with people about things happening in the community, because they find it enjoyable/entertaining and to be a better citizen.

And, contrary to popular belief, readers across all age groups turn to local newspapers and their digital products to stay informed about their communities.

Readers also told us they need more local news from their community paper. As one survey respondent in California said, "Our paper keeps getting smaller. I would like to see more news items, what's happening in town, what's new in politics, etc. And they need to be quicker to respond to breaking news."

All of that takes a committed, local staff — something the legislation introduced by Congresswoman Claudia Tenney (NY-24) and Congresswoman Suzan DelBene (WA-1) will help to make happen.

So, what would this legislation mean to your local community?

Local businesses with fewer than 50 employees would receive a five-year non-refundable tax credit of up to \$5,000 in the first year and up to \$2,500 in the subsequent four years based on their spending level with local newspapers and local media.

Our study showed that six out of 10 American adults use newspaper advertising to help them decide what brands, products and local services to buy. Newspaper readers also are almost twice as likely to purchase products from a

number of important advertising categories than non-newspaper readers, including: automobiles, trucks and SUVs; home furnishings; home improvement products and services; and home services like pest control, plumbing, heating, etc.

With this legislation, we expect to see more businesses being able to afford to advertise to consumers, which — in turn — helps communities thrive.

For local newspapers, a five-year refundable tax credit would help them hire more journalists to bring you more news! It's a win-win for local communities.

Newspapers would receive a tax credit to be used for the compensation of journalists. The credit would cover 50% of journalists' compensation in the first year and 30% of compensation (up to \$50,000) in the subsequent four years. This tax credit would only be available to local community papers with fewer than 750 employees and, if they don't invest in their newsroom, they don't get the credit.

And these tax credits are only available to local newspapers. National newspaper outlets are not eligible.

The importance of local

newspapers and local business is the reason Reps. Tenney and DelBene introduced the legislation. We are most grateful for their support.

We need your support, as well, to encourage legislators to enact this legislation. Please contact the offices of your senators and representatives in the U.S. Congress and encourage them to add their support to this legislation.

These tax credits aren't permanent; they will sunset in five years. But, these critical five years will allow the newspaper industry the time needed to address the challenges that it is facing from Big Tech which often uses newspapers' content without compensation, as well as other technological and market challenges.

Visit www.usa.gov/elected officials for the contact information for your legislators.

More local reporting means more access for hometown news that citizens like you rely on. And stronger newspapers mean stronger advertising vehicles for local businesses.

Dean Ridings is the CEO of America's Newspapers, an organization serving more than 1,550 newspapers across the U.S. and Canada. Learn more at newspapers.org.

United Methodist Church to host community blood drive

Coal City United Methodist Church (located at 6805 E. McArdle Road in Coal City), will host a community blood drive in conjunction with Versiti Blood Center on

Wednesday, Aug. 16, from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

If you would be willing to donate blood, please contact Karen Hart at 708-217-5808 to schedule a preferred time or register online at versiti.org/il.

Walk-ins are also welcome, but appointments are recommended. Please bring a photo ID, eat a good meal, and be sure to drink plenty of water before donating.

55th class reunion for WHS graduates

The WHS 55th class reunion will be held Saturday, Sept. 23, at Haydens Crossing, 107 N. Water St., at 5:30 p.m. You will be responsible for your drinks and if interested in eating, they have a restaurant on the other side.

This is Homecoming weekend and the football game will be on Friday night. The varsity game should start around 7 p.m.

If you would like your information added to our 55th class reunion booklet, please email Marilyn Matlock at mmatlock6549@gmail.com and she will send you the questionnaire. This information must be returned by Aug. 15.

If you are in contact with other classmates that won't see article, please pass along this information.

Togliatti/Togliatto reunion Sept. 10

Members of the Togliatti/Togliatto family are reminded that the annual reunion will be held Sunday, Sept. 10 in the small pavilion at the Coal City Area Club.

The reunion will begin at 1 p.m. A buffet style dinner will be served. Attendees are asked to bring tableware and beverages for their family and a dish to pass for the buffet table.

Close the curtains

About 40 percent of unwanted heat buildup in homes is through windows. Use awnings or curtains to deflect the sun. Closing curtains on the sunny side of the house can help with cooling costs and making things the temperature more comfortable.

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SATURDAY AUGUST 5TH

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More information: **Wilmington IL ShareFest**

#WHATCANYOUSHARE

Electric vehicle plant opens in Will County

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD – Gov. JB Pritzker has spent much of his time in recent weeks promoting the state's electric vehicle industry and touting the impact of his signature Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, or CEJA, including during a week-long trade mission to the United Kingdom.

On Friday, Pritzker was in Joliet where he joined other elected officials and local dignitaries to celebrate the grand opening of a new Lion Electric assembly plant, the first new automotive factory in the greater Chicago area since 1965.

Lion Electric announced plans to build its new facility in May 2021, just as state lawmakers were negotiating the final details of CEJA. The Canadian-based company specializes in medium and heavy-duty all-electric vehicles, including electric school buses.

The 900,000 square foot facility in Will County is expected to employ about 1,400 people and have a production capacity of 20,000 buses and trucks per year.

The Lion Electric factory opening came on the same day that the state's Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity announced \$38

million in funding availability to develop 13 regional "CEJA Workforce hubs," a training program that's intended to prepare people for entry-level jobs in the clean energy industry.

Speaking at the Lion plant Friday, Pritzker outlined some of the state's EV manufacturing and workforce development programs included in CEJA, the 2021 law that will require 100 percent carbon-free energy production in the state by 2045.

"This is about more than just cars on the road. It's also about making sure that we have the buses, the community experience of the new clean energy economy," Pritzker said, directing his comments toward younger people in the audience. "Because while all of that is very important, it's predicated on having a planet that's environmentally sustainable for your generation and beyond."

The event came on the heels of a weeklong trade mission that Pritzker led to the United Kingdom, where he and 41 other state government and business officials spent much of their time promoting Illinois' electric vehicle industry and its clean energy initiatives.

Among the events they attended in the U.K. was the Goodwood Festival of Speed,

an annual motorsports festival in southeast England, where Pritzker said the delegation met with officials from many auto manufacturing companies, including some in the EV industry.

"Goodwood attracts the senior executive teams from, really, all of the major automotive companies across the world," Pritzker said during a virtual news conference just before leaving the U.K. "So it's a great place to go to meet everybody all at once, everybody from Mercedes to Toyota to Ford, and all the other companies that you can think of, and also some of the startup companies as well, many of the EV suppliers."

In addition to promoting the state's clean energy industry, Pritzker said the U.K. trip was also an opportunity to tout Illinois' assets in the emerging field of quantum computing, as well as more traditional industries such as financial services, hospitality, manufacturing and food processing.

But he said the state's clean energy initiatives, and CEJA in particular, have become big selling points when marketing Illinois to an international audience.

"Don't underestimate that here in the U.K. and across Europe, the idea that we are focused on (being) fossil fuel-free by 2050 ... is quite impor-

tant to them," he said. "When they think about states – Mississippi or, you know, I could name lots of states that don't have climate policy – they know that their customers expect them to be producing products using clean energy, and that can't be done, or at least not enough of it, in those other states."

The delegation that travelled to the U.K. included Pritzker and his wife MK, several members of his staff, several officials from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, higher education officials and executives from several Illinois-based companies.

A spokesperson for the governor's office said the Pritzkers paid for their own

travel and the state paid the expenses of state employees. But a final cost of the trip was

not yet available because not all participants had yet submitted their expense reports.

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Puzauskas, Pegg wed



Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Pegg

Mary Puzauskas and Anthony Pegg, of Bloomington, IL were united in marriage on June 10, 2023 at Ewing cultural Center in Bloomington with Kent King-Nobles officiating.

Parents of the bride are John and Sandra Pazauskas of Bloomington and parents of the groom are Robert Pegg, of Peoria, IL and Lori Lamarra, of Bloomington. Anthony is the grandson of Ruth Gresham, of Wilmington.

The bride received a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science from the University of Illinois. She is a Certified Veterinary Technician employed at Miller Park Zoo in Bloomington and Town and Country Animal Hospital.

The groom earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Marketing from Western Governor's University. He is employed in creative services at State Farm Corporate.

Brigitte Boyle was maid of honor and bridesmaids were Julia Benzel, Rose Johnson and Charlee Pazauskas. Sofia Smith and Daphne Huston were flower girls.

Chris Hospelhorn served as best man and groomsmen were Ryan Thrush, Matt Kane, Sean Palmer, Trevor Toft, Blake Svensson and Connor Anderson. Ushers were Connor and Miller Jensen, while ring bearers were Bryce Shepherd and Rory Huston.

A reception was held at the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts.



Mudventures Jr. Fun Run is BACK! Hop the ninja boards, sprint under the misting tent, climb over the hay bales, and continue on through our obstacle course. Be prepared to get wet! Anticipate getting muddy! Think about getting sudsy? From mud to bubbles, we've packed this course full of sloppy fun. Children ages 5 to 12 will have a blast on this course as it weaves throughout the park district.

Saturday, August 5

Fee: \$20 per participant for pre-registration;
Same day registration: \$25
Fee includes: Race T-Shirt*,
Finisher Medal, and after party!
Registration Deadline:
July 14 (to guarantee t-shirt)

Same day registration and check-in begin at 8:00am.
Children will run in waves according to when they check in.
First wave begins at 8:30am. Waves will start every few minutes and will end when all kids have run. Registration ends at 10:00am with the final wave immediately following.
*Race day registration available but t-shirt not guaranteed
**All participants must have a parent/guardian sign a waiver in order to run the race.



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OBITUARIES

Jody Florez

CHICAGO HEIGHTS—Jody Florez, 57, of Chicago Heights, IL, passed away Sunday, July 23, 2023 at Advocate Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn, IL.

Born March 3, 1966 in Chicago Heights, Jody Marie was a daughter of Jose (the late Barbara) Castaneda, of Lecanto, FL and the late Peggy (Warren) Zych. She was raised in Chicago Heights and worked as a waitress at various restaurants throughout the years. Jody founded a Spiritual Group on Facebook called Live Tarot Readings with Jada and Friends, reaching over 10,000 followers on both Facebook and TikTok.

Jody will be most remembered for her close relationship with her daughters and granddaughters who will miss her dearly.

Survivors include her father, Jose; three children: Jessica (Elijah) D'Andrea, of Lecanto; Sarah Hendron, of Grant Park and Alicia Florez,



of Wilmington; nine grandchildren: Alyssa, Mariah, Cameron, Jocelyn, Aria, Kelsey, Kaydence, Dalton and Jayden, and one great-grandchild, Jasper.

Jody was preceded in death by her mother, Peggy Zych; brother, Leroy McConathy and sister, Debi Gantner.

Per Jody's wishes cremation rites have been accorded, and a private family celebration of her life was held.

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

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

Norma E. Geiss

WILMINGTON—Norma E. Geiss, 88, of Wilmington, passed away Tuesday, July 18, 2023 at her home, surrounded by her loving family.

Born June 3, 1935 in Mt. Vernon, IL, Norma was a daughter of Rupert and Marie (nee Eyerkuss) Wendler. She was raised and educated in Mt. Vernon, and then married Merle Dixon Geiss in 1952. Together, Norma and Merle would make their home and raise her family in Wilmington. She worked over 35 years for the Free Press Newspapers, preparing newspapers every week to go out for delivery. Norma loved going to bingo with her loving daughter, Diane, and her greatest joy was spending time with her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

Survivors include her six children: Lester (Darlene) Geiss and Terry (Becky) Geiss, both of Wilmington; Sue (the late Bill) Dorsett, of Avon Lake, OH; Diane (Dave) Carter, of Wilmington; Marion Ramsey, of Auburn, KY and Mickey (Tammy) Geiss, of Wilmington; numerous



grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild, and several nieces and nephews.

Norma was preceded in death by her parents, husband, and her six brothers and sisters.

The family will receive friends for a visitation on Wednesday, July 26, 2023 at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Road, in Wilmington from 11 a.m. until the time of funeral service at 1 p.m. Interment will follow at Oakwood Cemetery in Wilmington, where Norma will be laid to rest with her husband.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Norma's memory to Kuzma Care Cottage or to the American Heart Association.

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

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

William M. Johnson

 MORRIS—William M. Johnson, "Bill," 73, of Morris, formerly of Joliet, passed away Wednesday, July 19, 2023 at the Lightways Hospice Home in Joliet.

Born May 4, 1950 in Sycamore, IL, William Marshall was a son of Wayne and Vietta (Long) Johnson. He was raised in Joliet and graduated from Joliet Central High School with the class of 1968. Following high school, Bill served in the United States Army until his honorable discharge in 1973.

Following his military service, he gained employment with the railroad company before he went to work for Commonwealth Edison. Bill later held employment with and retired from Midwest Generating as a turbine operator. He also served as a part time Will County Sheriff's Deputy, and was an avid gun and rifle enthusiast. Bill loved going to the range to use his firearms, but he also just enjoyed spending as much time outdoors as possible, especially fishing. He enjoyed going to local auctions or sales and developed an affinity for antique clocks,



learning to refurbish them.

Survivors include three children: Angela Wood (Michael Riolla) and Nichole (Chuck) Lacey, both of Morris, and James Johnson, of Warsaw, MO; grandchildren: Chance, Savannah, Jordyn, and Carter; and two sisters, Linda Johnson and Lisa Johnson, both of Joliet.

Bill was preceded in death by his parents, one son, William J. Johnson, and one brother, Dennis Johnson.

Visitation was held on Tuesday, July 25, 2023 at Reeves Funeral Home in Morris.

A funeral procession immediately followed to Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, where Bill was laid to rest with full military honors.

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

Funeral services and arrangements were made under the direction and care of Reeves & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory in Morris.

James Winker

WILMINGTON—James P. Winker, 48, of Wilmington, passed away July 17, 2023 at home due to natural causes. He was born Feb. 10, 1975 to Carol (Bormet) Combes and the late James A. Winker, both of Wilmington.

James grew up in rural Frankfort and moved to Wilmington in 1989. He was a 150 operating engineer, he enjoyed hunting and fishing. James was an avid hunter, gun enthusiast, and loved animals, especially dogs. He enjoyed family outings, especially spending time with his children and all of his nieces and nephews.

He was the loving son of Carol and Floyd Combes; father of Jacob and Samantha; brother of Christy (Thomas) Ziller, Jon (Kristin) Winker, Jason (Annie) Winker, Connie Proctor, Jeff (Joya) Winker, Jeremy Winker, Floyd (Alma) Combes, Kenny (Natalie) Combes, Kirby (Eric) Slafky, Michelle Combes, and Matt (Stephani) Combes. Proud uncle of twelve nieces, twelve nephews, two-great nephews, and one great niece.

He was preceded in death by both sets of



grandparents, Peter and Irma Winker and Vernon and Alice Bormet; father, James A. Winker; one brother, Alan Richard; two uncles, Peter Winker and Warren Bormet; one aunt, Francis Ezell; an infant nephew, Zachary Michael Winker; and an infant niece, Sophia Grace Proctor.

A celebration of life will be held at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 East Kahler Road, in Wilmington on Sunday, Aug. 6, 2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 pm. Private interment will be at St. John's Cemetery in Mokena, IL at a later date.

Preferred memorials may be made in Jim's memory to Kuzma Care Cottage 635 South Main Street Wilmington.

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

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

Mary Kroeger

SHOREWOOD—Mary "Jean" Kroeger, 82, formerly of Joliet and Punta Gorda, FL and resident of Alden Courts of Shorewood, passed away Saturday, July 15, 2023.

Born Aug. 22, 1940 in Evergreen Park, IL, Mary Jean was a daughter of Edward W. and Mary A. (Wiechern) O'Reilly. She was raised and educated in Evergreen Park and graduated from high school in 1958. On June 30, 1962, Jean married Paul H. Kroeger and together they made a home and raised a family. In 2005 she retired from Stepping Stones in Joliet where she was a dedicated employee for 20 years.

Jean and Paul moved to Punta Gorda, FL and enjoyed 14 wonderful years living out their retirement there. While living in Joliet Jean was a member of Holy Family Catholic Church and while in Florida she was a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church. In addition to being a faithful Catholic her whole life, Jean was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother who enjoyed spending time in the sunshine, black coffee, ice cream, crossword puzzles, reading and gardening. Jean was a lifelong caregiver. She was always caring for others and she loved to celebrate. No special occasion or holiday went unrecognized by Jean.

Jean will be greatly missed by her children: Paul H. (Carol) Kroeger, of Diamond; Edward W. (Mary Jo) Kroeger, of Morris and Mary M. (Kevin) Sepulveda, of Shorewood; grandchildren: Timm (Jennifer) Kroeger, Robert Kroeger, Joseph Kroeger, Daniel Kroeger, Jessica Kroeger, Heather Kroeger, Lauren Sepulveda, Landon



Sepulveda and Liam Anderson; one great-granddaughter, Lyla Kroeger; sisters: Nancy Corless, of Florida; Karen (Vincent) Solano, of Lisle, IL and Janet Murray and Joanell (Francis) Zawaski, both of Evergreen Park; one sister-in-law, Linda O'Reilly, of Missouri and numerous nieces and nephews, as well as several cousins.

Jean was preceded in death by her parents, her father-in-law and mother-in-law, Herbert and Margaret Kroeger; husband, Paul (2016); brother, James O'Reilly and brothers-in-law: Jerry Corless, Robert Murray and Ralph Kroeger.

Cremation rites have been accorded.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at Holy Family Catholic Church, 600 Brook Forest Avenue in Shorewood on Saturday, July 29, 2023 at 10 a.m.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Jean's memory to: Stepping Stones in Joliet.

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

The family wishes to extend their heartfelt appreciation to the staff at Alden Courts of Shorewood for their dedicated and loving care over the past two years. Your kindness and compassion will never be forgotten.

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

William Treadman Jr.

WILMINGTON—William J. "Bill" Treadman Jr., 66, of Wilmington, passed away Tuesday, July 18, 2023 at Loyola University Medical Center in Proviso Township, IL, from complications due to open heart surgery.

Born Nov. 29, 1956 in Joliet, William Joseph was the son of William Sr. and Catherine (nee Schaubel) Treadman. He was raised and educated in Wilmington and graduated from Wilmington High School with the class of 1974. Bill gained employment with Alumax in Morris, and later worked for Republican Printing Company in Joliet and retired from Sears in Manteno.

An active member of Saint Rose Catholic Church, he was an avid sports fan, supporting the Chicago Cubs, White Sox, and Bears. Baseball was a lifelong passion of Bill's, as he was active in little league, school league, and travel clubs throughout his youth. He was also a NASCAR fan and looked forward to the Daytona 500 every year. Bill's enthusiasm for music was very apparent, and he could often be found listening to classic 70's and 80's rock and roll. He was a fun, outgoing guy who stayed true to his roots and loved his family dearly.

Survivors include two sisters: Grace Hert, of

Wilmington and June (the late Jim) Miller, of Winston, GA; one nephew, Bernie Warriner, of Texas; three aunts: Beverly Treadman, Elsie Mae Krohn, and Diane Hicks; and his cousins: Pat Abanatha, Jack Skeldon, Jeff Treadman, Mike Sullivan, Sue Lyday, Karen Friedenber, and Debbie Treadman.

Bill was preceded in death by his parents and one sister, Charlene Warriner; one nephew, David Jessen, and several aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Cremation rites were accorded, and the family held a Celebration of Life on Saturday, July 22, 2023 presided by Deacon Jay Plese.

Interment followed the service at Oakwood Cemetery in Wilmington.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Bill's memory to Kuzma Care Cottage in Wilmington.

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

Cremation services and memorial arrangements were made under the direction and care of Reeves & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory.

Marie Johnson

WILMINGTON—Marie Johnson, 90, of Wilmington, passed away Wednesday, July 19, 2023 at her home.

Born Feb. 13, 1933 in Coal City, Marie Eleanor was the only child of William and Rita (nee Rink) Novy. She was raised in Coal City and Wilmington, and graduated from Wilmington High School. She gained employment with Commonwealth Edison where she would meet her future husband, Robert Johnson. Marie worked several other jobs over the years, but she made taking care of her family and maintaining their home on the farm her number one priority. She was a lifelong animal lover, starting as a young girl when she would raise her own pony. Marie also raised and trained poodles, with several of them being shown and named champions. She



loved to work in the garden and care for her flowers, and was simply a gentle, giving person willing to help anyone that needed a hand.

Marie is survived by her son, Rick Johnson, of Wilmington, and was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, and one son, Rob Johnson.

Cremation rites are being accorded, and Marie will be privately laid to rest with her husband at Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wilmington.

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

Cremation services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory in Wilmington.

Red Cross provides tips for dealing with a week of high heat

High temperatures in the 90s are expected throughout much of the Illinois region this week. It is important to take precautions to avoid heat exhaustion or heat stroke. The Red Cross offers steps you can take to help stay safe when the temperatures soar.

- Hot cars can be deadly. Never leave children or pets in your vehicle. The inside temperature of the car can quickly reach 120 degrees.
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids. Avoid drinks with caffeine or alcohol.
- Check on family, friends and neighbors who do not have air conditioning, who spend much of their time alone or who are more likely to be affected by the heat.
- If you don't have air conditioning, seek relief from the heat during the warmest part of the day in places like

schools, libraries, theaters, malls, etc.

- Avoid extreme temperature changes.
- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing. Avoid dark colors because they absorb the sun's rays.
- Slow down, stay indoors and avoid strenuous exercise during the hottest part of the day.
- Postpone outdoor games and activities.
- Take frequent breaks and use a buddy system when working outdoors.
- Check on animals frequently to ensure that they are not suffering from the heat. Make sure they have plenty of cool water and shade.

Excessive heat can lead to sunburn, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. If someone is experiencing heat cramps in the legs or

abdomen, get them to a cooler place, have them rest, lightly stretch the affected muscle, and replenish their fluids with a half a glass (about 4 ounces) of cool water every 15 minutes.

If someone is exhibiting signs of heat exhaustion (cool, moist, pale or flushed skin, heavy sweating, headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness and exhaustion), move them to a cooler place, remove or loosen tight clothing and spray the person with water or apply cool, wet cloths or towels to the skin. Fan the person.

If they are conscious, give small amounts of cool water to drink. Make sure the person drinks slowly. If the person refuses water, vomits or begins to lose consciousness, call 911.

Heat stroke usually occurs by ignoring the signals of heat exhaustion. Heat stroke develops when the body systems are overwhelmed by heat and begin to stop functioning. Signs include hot, red skin which may be dry or moist; changes in consciousness; vomiting and high body temperature. Call 911 immediately if someone shows signs of heat stroke. Quickly cool the person's body by immersing them up to their neck in cold water if possible. Otherwise, douse or spray the person with cold water, or cover the person with cold, wet towels or bags of ice.

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Wine will continue to flow despite dry conditions

BY DANIEL GRANT
FARMWEEK

Grape production this season is expected to flourish at Mackinaw Valley Vineyard despite it being mired in a severe drought.

Diane Hahn, owner/operator of the specialty farm and agritourism center located on a scenic glacier moraine in central Illinois, discussed the reasons for her optimism during a recent FarmWeek interview.

"Grapes are an interesting fruit. They're a fairly drought-resistant plant," she said. "Of course they need water, but they do much better in drier conditions than row crops."

Hahn's late husband, Paul, purchased the farm and planted grapes in the former row crop fields nearly a quarter century ago. Diane operates the 15-acre vineyard and tasting room with her son, Eric, and daughter, Carly Drezek.

The family grows 20 varieties of French-American hybrid grapes developed at the University of Minnesota and Cornell University.

"They're good for our climate," Hahn said of the grape varieties. "They can survive in up to 30-below temperatures."

The 25-year-old grape vines, which aren't irrigated, have also established deep roots that allow the plants to tap into subsoil moisture during dry spells, such as the current drought.

"They are pretty tolerant of low-water situations," Hahn said. "Our biggest issue when rain is a problem is toward the



Photo by Daniel Grant

ERIC HAHN displays a productive set of grapes growing this season at Mackinaw Valley Vineyard in central Illinois.

end of August when the berries are starting to finish.

"If it's wet in August, the berries can swell and split."

One impact of the drought is the grapes could be smaller come harvest later this summer and fall.

But that could actually be a good thing as far as wine production goes.

"We may not have as much fruit," Hahn said. "The grapes could be smaller, so they'll have more intense flavor."

The other main weather

impact on the grape crop near Mackinaw so far this season was a hard spring freeze, which damaged about 5% of the plants.

Mackinaw Valley Vineyard produces and harvests all its own grapes and makes all its wine on site. Mackinaw Valley typically offers about 20 to 24 wine varieties each season, including reds, whites, blushes and flavored wines.

"We have very farm-centric, local stuff," Hahn said. "We just appreciate people supporting us."

The vineyard hosts several family-friendly events, including a popular concert series during the summer.

"Paul had a vision when he bought the place and we keep expanding it," Hahn said.

The vineyard and tasting room were opened to the public 20 years ago, in 2003.

"It's kind of an exciting milestone," Hahn added.

For more information about Mackinaw Valley Vineyard, visit the website, mackinawvalleyvineyard.com.

IL nuclear fleet meeting power demand

WARRENVILLE

Constellation's 11 reactors at six nuclear plants in Illinois are positioned to supply uninterrupted carbon-free electricity to the equivalent of more than 8 million homes in Illinois and beyond during what is forecasted to be a hotter than usual summer.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has predicted above normal temperatures for many regions of the U.S. throughout this summer, as the climate crisis brings on more extreme weather.

Constellation's nuclear fleet has operated at a near perfect capacity factor of more than 97% over the summer in the last 10 years, meaning the fleet's reactors were running at nearly full power every hour of every day through the heat for the last decade.

More than 8,000 workers took part in important technology upgrades and equipment maintenance during refueling outages at Illinois nuclear plants this spring, to support 24/7 delivery of carbon-free electricity during the hottest months ahead.

"We invested hundreds of millions of dollars this spring in our clean energy centers to ensure they are ready to provide power to millions of Illinois families and work-

places as temperatures soar this summer," said Dave Rhoades, chief nuclear officer, Constellation. "We produce reliable, carbon-free nuclear power all year round, and during times of high heat when it's needed most."

During the scheduled spring refueling outages, workers replaced or refurbished dozens of pumps and motors, performed quality assurance inspections on reactor and fuel components and completed tens of thousands of other technical tasks to help the power plants provide uninterrupted electricity for up to 24 straight months.

The outage projects also brought a welcome boost to employment and retail activity in the Braidwood, Dresden, Byron and LaSalle communities near the facilities. Thousands of skilled electricians, pipefitters, welders, carpenters, laborers, steamfitters and other tradespeople come to the nuclear sites from across the country to perform inspections, tests and maintenance activities.

"NABTU applauds Constellation's continuous commitment to operational excellence," said Sean McGarvey, President of North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU).

"Constellation's refueling

outages provide family-sustaining jobs for thousands of NABTU skilled craft professionals. Our workers are proud to help build and maintain these critical projects and increase reliability of continuous affordable power for thousands of American families, especially during the hottest months of the year."

Constellation invests billions of dollars in its plants every decade, replacing and upgrading equipment during refueling outages and at other times, so they can be operated safely for up to 80 years. Over the years, these cumulative investments in our plants are like taking your car in for maintenance, stripping it down to its frame, and rebuilding the engine and replacing the bearings and all of its moving parts.

"Our precise scheduling for important upgrades, maintenance activities and technical inspections ensures our units are only briefly offline during periods of lower power demand in the spring," said Tim Hanley, chief operating officer, Constellation.

Legislation passed in Illinois in 2021 – the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) – saved three of the state's nuclear plants from early retirement, preserving tens of thousands of jobs and prevent-

ing an increase in pollution and energy costs.

In 2022, Congress passed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which provides a base level of support for nuclear energy nationwide. Both pieces of legislation are enabling the continued investment in and operation of Constellation's nuclear fleet.

Zacharias graduates

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Crime statistics website released

The Illinois State Police has officially launched a new public website to view crime statistics in Illinois.

The Crime in Illinois Online website is part of the Illinois Uniform Crime Reporting Program, which serves as the state repository

for crime statistics to provide reliable information for use in law enforcement.

The website includes data on crime rates per county, the type of offenses and the ability to download crime reports.

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Looking for experienced laborer or apprentice. Call Mike 815-634-3976. ca28-31

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REAL ESTATE

SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE of 180 W. Bodine Dr., Braidwood, IL 60408 (This is a single-family home that is not completely finished being constructed). On the 3rd day of August, 2023 to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse Annex, 57 N. Ottawa Street, Room 201, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **Grundy Bank Plaintiff V. Wesley P. Shats, Nicole M. Shats, James P. Veraveic, James P. Construction, Inc., Unknown Owners and Non-Record Claimants** Defendant. Case No. 22 FC 0980 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: **GEIGER, DURKEE AND VAZQUEZ, LLC 415 LIBERTY ST MORRIS, IL 60450 P: 815-942-5072 F: 815-942-5073** PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. Published in the Free Press Newspapers on Wed., July 12, 19 & 26, 2023.

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REAL ESTATE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COUNTY OF GRUNDY - MORRIS, ILLINOIS BMO HARRIS BANK NA; Plaintiff, vs. FELICIA L. BARNES; LAKEWOOD TRAILS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION; Defendants. 22 FC 10 NOTICE OF SALE PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure entered in the above entitled cause Intercounty Judicial Sales Corporation will on Wednesday, August 16, 2023, at the hour of 2:00 p.m. in the office of Donald F. Black, 201 Liberty Street, Suite 211, Morris, Illinois 60450, sell to the highest bidder for cash, the following described mortgaged real estate: P.I.N. 03-14-103-025. Commonly known as 1304 Burns Lane, Minooka, IL 60447. The improvement on the property consists of a single family residence. If the subject mortgaged real estate is a unit of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Condominium Property Act. Sale terms: 10% down by certified funds, balance within 24 hours, by certified funds. No refunds. The property will NOT be open for inspection. For information call Sales Department at Plaintiff's Attorney, Manley Deas Kochalski, LLC, One East Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60601. (614) 220-5611. File Number 22-000341 INTERCOUNTY JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION intercountyjudicialsales.com I3224206 Published in the Free Press Newspapers on Wed., July 12, 19 & 26, 2023.

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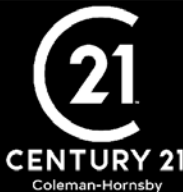
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SAFE-T Act now law after complicated opinions Senior health fair Aug. 2

Both the majority and minority opinions in the Illinois Supreme Court's landmark ruling on the SAFE-T Act last week claimed the other side was ignoring the "plain language" of the Illinois Constitution. Each focused on a single, but different word.

As the all-Democrat majority noted, the judiciary must look at the "plain language used in its natural and popular meaning when the constitutional provision was adopted."

For the majority, the "plain language" in question was from the Illinois Constitution's Bill of Rights: "All persons shall be bailable by sufficient sureties, except for the following offenses where the proof is evident or the presumption great."

The Illinois Supreme Court created a Commission on Pretrial Practices in 2017, which eventually reported back that "bailable" by "sufficient sureties" did not necessarily mean cash bail. The word "bail," the commission reported, "literally" means "release," and does not necessarily mandate a cash component. Last week's majority opinion emphasizes that the state's Constitution never specifically spells out that bail is monetary in nature.

Importantly, the majority opined that cash bail "was all but unknown" when the state's original Constitution was first approved in 1818, and the same basic language from that document remains in force today.

"The bail clause does not include the term 'monetary,' so it did not cement the practice of monetary bail, however long-standing and prevalent across Illinois, into our constitution. 'Sufficient sureties' is not limited to sufficient monetary sureties, and we cannot append or supplement the constitutional text," the majority ruled.

The all-Republican minority opinion relies on a different word in a different part of the state's Bill of Rights to argue that the statute "is in direct violation of the plain language of our constitution's bill of rights."

The section was written to protect the rights of crime victims, partly by allowing them to have their and their families' safety considered when courts fix the "amount" of bail. But



CAPITOL FACTS
Rich Miller

within the statute, the minority argued, "the amount of bail is effectively set at zero for all cases under the Act," which therefore "wholly nullified" victims' constitutional rights.

The majority opinion countered that argument: "The crime victims' rights clause mentions the 'amount of bail,' not the amount of monetary bail. The word 'amount' connotes quantity and does not only mean a quantity of money but rather, consonant with the bail clause, a quantity of sufficient sureties."

The majority went on to note that crime victims' rights were specifically protected in the statute within the confines of the Bill of Rights and that "Nothing in the crime victims' rights clause's plain language indicates such an intent to upend suddenly, after 174 years, the constitutional history of bail in Illinois."

The opinions are a bit more complicated than what I've laid out, but that's really the essence of the two arguments.

The claim made against the statute brought by state's attorneys and sheriffs that the law violates the Constitution's separation of powers clause was dismissed by the majority using recent precedent and only mentioned by the minority in its argument that the plaintiffs had standing to bring the case in the first place. The rest of the plaintiffs' arguments were already dismissed at the trial level.

Former prosecutors have been actively recruited by both political parties forever, in all three branches of state government. That tradition probably won't change much, except perhaps in Chicago, but people throughout the political spectrum have complained for a very long time that decades, or even centuries, of "war on crime" laws pushed by those former prosecutors and their allies have resulted in the targeting of poor people of color for prosecution and imprisonment.

But the release of the Supreme Court's Commission on Pretrial Practices' report in April of 2020 which recommended abolishing cash bail, followed by the massive George Floyd protests in the summer of that year, along with insistence from activists that the legislature needed to take action, and then-House Speaker Michael Madigan's desperation to remain in power by locking in a long-frustrated Black Caucus' support and a billionaire governor sympathetic to their cause during what was essentially a closed-off, round-the-clock winter session held in the midst of a deadly worldwide pandemic and a dysfunctional and unfearful minority party all combined to pass this highly unusual bill.

States have long been called "laboratories of democracy." Illinois' laboratory has managed to produce this law, which is now confirmed as constitutional. We'll see how it goes.

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

On Wednesday, Aug. 2, State Representatives Jason Bunting and Jed Davis will join State Senators Sue Rezin and Tom Bennett in hosting a free senior health fair in Morris.

The event will be from 9 to 11 a.m. in the gymnasium at Saratoga Elementary School, 4040 N. Division St. Free health screenings will be available from a variety of different vendors. Area residents can join in to learn about the many ways to lead a happier and healthier lifestyle or to discuss programs that benefit seniors. Refreshments will be available.

Legislative brochures will be on hand and we will be available to answer your questions about state government.

FBI warns of grandparent scam

The FBI's Springfield office has issued a warning to Illinois residents about a scam tactic involving fraudsters pretending to be the victim's loved ones.

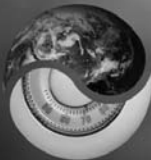
The "grandparent scam" as officials call it has been reported on several occasions this summer and several people have fallen victim.

It involves a bogus attorney asking for money to secure the release of a loved one from custody following a traffic accident.

The FBI said there were over 400 victims over the age of 60 who lost a combined \$3.8 million in grandparent scams last year.

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Thanks for the memories, 42nd Annual Braidwood Lions Summerfest



Photos by Marney Simon

WITH RIDES, ENTERTAINMENT, bingo, vendors, food, the car show, the pie eating contest, the baby contest, the parade, and MORE, the four day long 42nd Annual Braidwood Lions Summerfest had something for everyone, and once again went by too quickly. Summerfest returns July 18-21, 2024.



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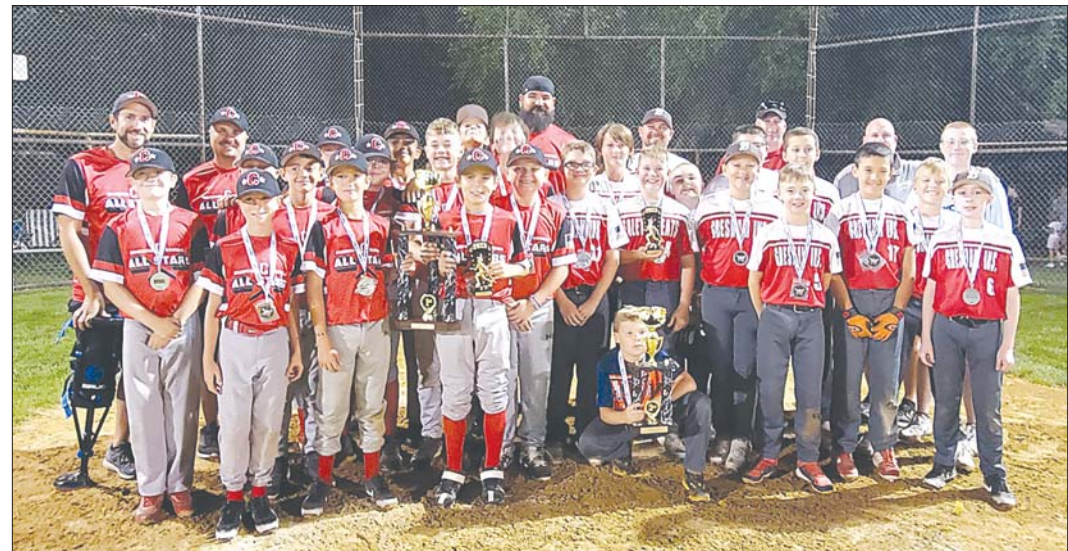
BBSA hosts a tournament of champions



Courtesy photos
THE BRAIDWOOD SUMMERFEST included the 9th annual Summerfest Tournament held by the Braidwood Baseball Softball Association. Pictured are the 1st and 2nd place teams in the 10U division. Taking 1st place was Dwight while the Braidwood team placed second.



THE 8U CHAMPIONSHIP trophy was awarded to Whiteford during the Braidwood Summerfest Tournament. The Braidwood team finished in second to be the third home team to make it to the title game. Whiteford and Braidwood teams are pictured together.



IN THE 12U DIVISION of the Summerfest tournament Braidwood battled it out with Channahon to decide first and second place. The team which claimed the title ended up being Channahon pictured here with their Braidwood opponents. The tournament was played Wednesday through Monday with teams from Braidwood, Channahon, Coal City, Dwight, Minooka, Pontiac and Whiteford.



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Registration opens for Megan's Mission 5K

Team Megan Bugg is preparing for its third annual 5K run/walk to end childhood cancer. The Megan's Mission 5K will be held Saturday, Sept. 16 in the village of Coal City. Proceeds will support the Megan's Mission Foundation that is dedicated to honoring Megan Bugg's goal of ending childhood cancer through advocacy, research and scholarship. The race will get underway at 6 p.m. in the 600 block of S. Broadway in Coal City. Babe's Tap will serve as the host location for run. The course will take racers south on Broadway to Reed Road and then back north into the village. The event is being held during Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and in conjunction with the village of Coal City's Fall Fest. The cost to participate is \$35 per person. Register on-line at runsignup.com/Race/IL/CoalCity/MegansMission

on In addition to the 5K in Coal City, there will be a virtual run and participants can sign-up through the on-line registration link. The cost for the virtual run is \$40 per person and registration must be completed by Sept. 28 for this portion of the event. Race T-shirts will be handed out and guaranteed to all who sign-up for the run by 11:59 p.m. on Sept. 3. Megan passed away in March after a seven year battle with alveolar Rhabdomyosarcoma. During her courageous and inspirational fight, she became an advocate for childhood cancer and through her efforts and those of the Megan's Mission Foundation over \$1.8 million has been raised for childhood cancer research. All funds raised from this event will go to the Megan's Mission Foundation.

Fossil Ridge Library News

Adult Programs

Aug. 3-Well Read Book Club, 6-7 p.m. The Well-Read book club meets to discuss memoirs, biographies, true crime, or a book selected by one of the members! Copies of monthly book selections are available for checkout at the front desk.

Teen Programs

July 28-Teen After hours at the Library, 5-10 p.m. Attention Teens! We will be playing games and watching a movie! Pizza and snacks will be provided. For more information visit fossilridge.org

Aug. 7-Teen Rock Climbing, registration and signed waiver required, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. Never been climbing before? Join us at Vertical Endeavors for a day of fun whether you're a brand-new beginner or seasoned

climber. Equipment and instruction provided by VE staff. Please bring a sack lunch.

Aug. 8-Teen Anime Club, 6-7 p.m. : Anime Club is an opportunity for teens to socialize with their friends after school while enjoying Japanese anime and manga.

Aug. 9-Teen Disaster Preparedness, 6-7:30 p.m. We know it's not "if" an emergency will happen, but "when" an emergency will happen. During this one and a half hour preparedness program, participants will review past local disasters and emergencies and identify potential disasters that are possible in their community.

Aug. 10-Teen Advisory Board, 4-5 p.m. Teenagers attending this program will gain volunteer/community hours, design and lead library

programs, and advise on library projects and collections.

Child Programs

Storytime-summer style, every Wednesday in August, 10:30-11 a.m. Join us outside by the back patio for fun engaging story times that will introduce books, music, rhymes, movement and occasional crafts. Each week will have a different theme, so you don't want to miss all the fun.

Aug. 7, 21, 28-Book Buddies, 4-4:30 p.m. Bring your sibling, caregiver, friend, or favorite stuffed animal and spend quiet time reading together to help you gain confidence in your reading skills.

Registration is required for all programs. For more information call 815-458-2187 or e-mail help@fossilridge.org.

Is your town giving you proper public notice?

Public notice has been an integral part of the Illinois Compiled Statutes since statehood because it serves several purposes.

Public notice requires governmental entities to tell when hearings are to be held, how money is being spent, what laws are being passed, what property is being sold.

Public notice provides a permanent record of actions that are taken and a legally defensible notification of actions about to be taken.

Public notice is the only way that exact wording can be provided by the entity's counsel.

Newspapers ensure government accountability by acting as an independent third-party. Government officials must ensure that the actions of the government are transparent to the general public.

Publication of public notices in newspapers, independent third parties, helps confirm that the government is accountable to the electorate. When a newspaper publishes a notice, it verifies that the government has provided proper notice to the public.