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Forewarned is forearmed: How Braidwood agencies prepared for August 11 storms

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

Long before powerful winds tore through Braidwood on Aug. 11, Braidwood ESDA officials were already preparing for what forecasters feared could become a major weather incident.

Braidwood ESDA Coordinator Josh Bolatto

said emergency management officials began closely monitoring forecasts Monday evening after the National Weather Service issued a "Decision Support Service Packet" outlining the potential for severe weather across northern Illinois.

By Tuesday morning, forecast models had become even more con-

cerning.

"The 'D word' — Derecho — started being mentioned, and our region remained central to every forecast model run as the morning progressed," Bolatto said. "Braidwood has experienced several of these destructive weather events in the past, and each one has allowed us to improve our preparedness,

response and recovery efforts."

Anticipating significant impacts, the city activated its Emergency Operations Center at the Braidwood Fire Department early Tuesday morning. Officials monitored weather radar, tracked emergency radio traffic from neighboring counties, and deployed local storm spotters to provide real-time reports as conditions deteriorated.

As the storm system approached, strong winds, heavy rain and hail swept into the area. Radar indicated possible rotation, prompting the National Weather Service to issue a tornado warning at 10:30 a.m. The warning triggered an Emergency Alert System notification and activation of the city's outdoor warning sirens.

"Braidwood experienced estimated straight-line winds of 75 to 80 mph, which can do just as much damage as a tornado," Bolatto said.

Once the worst of the storm had passed, city officials immediately began coordinating damage assessments and emergency response efforts involving the fire department, police department, Emergency Services and Disaster Agency, and the Street and Public Works departments.

Numerous 911 calls

SEE ESDA PAGE 2



Photo from Braidwood ESDA

IN BRAIDWOOD, THE Aug. 11 storm resulted in straight-line winds that toppled trees and resulted in power outages all over town.

Elliot to lead R-C District as superintendent

STAFF REPORT

Brad Elliot is taking the reins at Reed-Custer School District 255U with a focus on building relationships, strengthening community connections and keeping students at the center of every decision.

Elliot has assumed the superintendent's position following the retirement of Mark Mitchell, bringing years of classroom and administrative experience to the district.

In a message welcoming students and families to the 2026-27 school year, Elliot said he is looking forward to becoming part of a district already known for its accomplishments.

"I am excited and honored to have joined the Reed-Custer School District as the new Superintendent," Elliot said. "Reed-Custer has an incredible tradition in academics, the arts, athletics and beyond."

Elliot said continuing that tradition will mean remaining responsive to students and making their needs the priority.

"I look forward to continuing the mission of excellence as we remain focused and responsive to the needs of our students," he said. "Considering what is best for our kids in every decision that we make, we will continue to maximize student learning and experiences."

Elliot comes to Reed-Custer with two decades of experience as an educator and school administrator.

He began his career teaching middle school math, spending eight years at Bradley Central and Limestone Middle School. He then moved into administration at Herscher High School, serving three years as assistant principal followed by nine years as principal.

Elliot earned his undergraduate degree from Western Illinois University, a master's degree from Olivet Nazarene University and an education specialist degree from Northern Illinois University.

For Elliot, education was a career choice that came early in life.

"I've always enjoyed working with kids, and I knew from an early age that I wanted to be a teacher," Elliot said. "I was fortunate enough to have excellent teachers that challenged me and supported me throughout my K-12 education."

That experience helped shape the type of educator and administrator he wanted to become.

"I hope to have provided a similarly positive experience for teachers and staff over the years," he said.

Elliot said Reed-Custer's reputation was among the things that



BRAD ELLIOT

attracted him to the superintendent's position.

As he settles into his new role, Elliot said his leadership approach will center on four areas.

"My leadership vision will focus on relationships, community, trust and transparency," he said.

Those priorities are reflected in the district's theme for the new school year — "Build the Bridge."

Elliot said the theme recognizes both what Reed-Custer has already accomplished and what the district can achieve in the future.

"We will take pride in our strong foundation while turning our focus toward the endless possibilities ahead for our students," Elliot said.

The bridge, he explained, is also symbolic of the partnerships necessary to provide students with the best opportunities possible.

"Build the Bridge represents the connectedness between staff, students, parents, and community members that student success requires," Elliot said.

Family life

Education is also a family affair in the Elliot household. His wife, Timoney, is a media specialist in the Herscher School District. The couple has been married for 15 years and has two children, Charleston, 10, and Lawson, 7. The family lives in Limestone, and the children stay busy with dance and baseball.

Away from school, Elliot enjoys spending time outdoors. His interests include kayaking, boating, coaching his children's sports and, more recently, golf.

He also shared a lighter fact about himself — he enjoys exercising, in part, so he can enjoy plenty of pizza.

Elliot said he is enthusiastic about what lies ahead for the district. "It's going to be a great year!"

City charts new course for parks with Master Parks Plan approval

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

The future of Braidwood's parks is no longer a collection of ideas scattered across meeting rooms, wish lists, and grant applications. It now has a roadmap — and, for the first time, a timeline.

In a move that could shape the city for decades, the Braidwood City Council approved Ordinance 2026-46 adopting the city's first Comprehensive Parks Master Plan, a sweeping vision intended to guide future investments in parks, trails, recreational facilities and community amenities throughout Braidwood and its planning area.

Blueprints for future

The newly adopted plan was developed through a partnership between the City of Braidwood and the Braidwood Park District and is designed to serve as a strategic blueprint for future recreation projects and grant funding.

The plan identifies five primary objectives: Providing new and replacement park amenities, improving connectivity through pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, addressing underserved areas, preserving natural areas and expanding recreational programming.

The ordinance formally adopts the master plan as the official Comprehensive Parks Master Plan for all property within the city as well

as unincorporated territory located within 1 1/2 miles of the city's boundaries.

Five-year plan

"The master plan's a five-year strategic guide for parks, recreation, trails, open space, community amenities," Mayor Todd Lyons said. "It establishes goals, identifies projects, and provides a roadmap."

Addressing concerns raised during public comment, Lyons emphasized that adoption of the document does not automatically commit the city to any specific project or expenditure.

"Basically, it's just a plan in place," he said. "Anything that would be done would be voted on."

Town Center plans

While the plan lays out a long-term vision, it also includes a detailed action plan identifying projects targeted for completion during the first two years.

Among the earliest priorities are improvements to a Town Center, including design, engineering and construction work scheduled to begin during the 2026-27 fiscal year.

The plan also calls for developing a phased improvement strategy for Old Smokey Park, with design and construction of initial projects beginning during the first year.

Playground upgrades are another major focus. Replacement of playground equipment at Old Smokey Park, Lions Park and Luke H.

Goodrich Park are planned during the first two years. Accessibility improvements are also planned, including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrades at both Visitor's Park and Old Smokey Park.

During the second year of implementation, city officials hope to begin development of a citywide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity plan between parks, neighborhoods and community destinations.

Choosing critical priorities

Not everyone supported the plan's adoption.

During public comment, former city administrator Tony Altieri argued the city should focus its resources on critical infrastructure needs, particularly the municipal water system.

"Our water system is in dire needs of upgrades, and we need another well, plant and water tower," Altieri said.

Referencing the Aug. 3 well failure, Altieri said the incident highlighted the need for continued investment in the city's water infrastructure.

"The last well that went down left us with one-third of the water we normally have," he said.

He said that hypothetically, if there had been a fire during the well failure, would the city have had sufficient water to fight the fire.

SEE PARK PLAN PAGE 2

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LOCAL Michigan Peaches

Tornado-spawning storms leave a trail of destruction

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

What began as a powerful line of thunderstorms in the morning hours of Tuesday, Aug. 11, almost immediately evolved into one of the most destructive weather events to strike the area in years, leaving damaged homes, downed trees, overturned vehicles, and thousands without power across Will and Grundy counties.

Wilmington's wide swath of damage

Surveying the destruction from Tuesday's storm, Wilmington Mayor Ben Dietz declared a state of emergency.

"We know many of our residents are still dealing with the aftermath..." Dietz said on Aug. 13, "We want you to know that the City is working every day to help our community recover."

The hardest hit community was Wilmington, where National Weather Service investigators confirmed an EF-1 tornado touched down at approximately 10:40 a.m. near West Baltimore Street and North 1st Street.

The twister packed winds of up to 90 mph and remained on the ground for about 1.5 miles, leaving a swath of destruction, before crossing the Kankakee River.

The tornado tore a large section of roof from Tire Tracks, an automotive repair shop at 507 W. Baltimore St., sending debris into a nearby strip mall.

The tornado then crossed the Kankakee River and subsequently tracked across the South Island Park

before hitting the Oakwood Cemetery, where it virtually uprooted trees, causing widespread damage. The tornado continued east on Ridge Street before finally lifting near the Forked Creek Preserve.

The funnel cloud grazed the ground for 1.5 miles, nearly two minutes and 150 yards wide, leaving a trail of damage. South Water Street (Highway 102) was closed for two days due to a massive tree that had fallen on power lines. South Main Street was also blocked by a tree.

Traffic on Highway 53 was rerouted onto Strip Mine Road due to leaning power poles south to Coal City Road.

While Wilmington bore the brunt of the storm, neighboring communities also suffered significant impacts.

Braidwood straight-line winds

As families prepared for the first day of school on Aug. 12, Mother Nature struck. In Braidwood, fierce straight-line winds snapped utility poles, downed power lines and brought a massive tree crashing across the northbound lanes of Interstate 55 near Coal City Road, completely blocking traffic during the height of the storm.

According to Josh Bolatto of Braidwood ESDA, the most significant damage was due to tree limbs snapping power lines.

"One of the worst incidents was on Cermak Road between Mitchell Street and Novy Road, where a large tree fell onto power lines, taking down multiple power poles with it," Bolatto said.

Torrential rainfall that followed prompted flash flood concerns as drainage systems clogged with storm debris. City crews and ESDA personnel launched a community-wide cleanup effort and are urging residents to report damage through the Will County Storm Damage Survey to help qualify for disaster assistance.

Coal City power outages

Coal City was hammered by winds estimated between 60 and 70 mph. One of the most dramatic incidents occurred along Route 113, where a massive tree snapped and fell onto a home, causing major structural damage.

More than 10,000 utility customers across Grundy County lost power as the storm tore through heavily wooded residential neighborhoods.

Despite the widespread destruction, there was one piece of welcome news: No injuries or fatalities were reported.

As residents continue with cleanup and recovery, officials warn homeowners about potential contractor scams and urge anyone seeking repairs to use only licensed, bonded and insured contractors.

ComEd crews worked overtime through Friday morning to restore service for the last few customers and offered emergency storm kits to residents through Wilmington City Hall. All of the kits have been distributed.

For many residents, Tuesday's storm lasted only a few minutes. The cleanup, however, will continue for days or even weeks, and the impact will haunt many for years to come.

ESDA, continued from page 1

reported downed power lines, broken utility poles, fallen trees and roadways blocked by debris. Street department crews quickly began clearing streets to ensure emergency responders could reach affected areas.

One of the most heavily damaged locations was along Cermak Road between Mitchell Street and Novy Road, where an enormous tree had crashed into power lines, bringing down multiple utility poles.

Another utility pole on Kennedy Road was left precariously suspended by power lines after sustaining significant damage. A home in the 400 block of Kennedy Road was also damaged when a tree fell onto the structure.

Despite the widespread damage, Bolatto said Braidwood escaped the worst-case scenario.

"Overall, Braidwood was not the worst-hit community, and we were actually lucky that we didn't get more damage," he said. "The cell which produced the EF-1 tornado had passed over Braidwood before touching down in Wilmington. It could have been much worse."

At the height of the outage, approximately 700 homes in Braidwood were without electricity. Residents relied on generators as utility crews worked around the clock to restore service. Most neighborhoods regained power by about 8 a.m. Thursday, though approximately 25 homes remained without electricity as of 9 p.m. that evening.

Cleanup efforts began almost immediately. Street department crews started collecting residential tree debris Wednesday and continued their work throughout the week and into the following week.

The storm is part of what has become a historically active year for severe weather in Illinois. As of 8 p.m. Thursday, Illinois had recorded 204 tornadoes in 2026, leading the nation and far surpassing second-place Iowa, which had reported 89 tornadoes.

Bolatto said the year's extreme weather serves as a reminder that residents should be prepared before disaster strikes.

"This figure helps to emphasize the importance of personal preparedness for residents before disasters and emergencies strike," Bolatto said. "Taking the time to make a plan or build an emergency preparedness kit makes a huge difference in the ability to weather the storm."

While crews continue cleanup efforts and residents recover from the damage, city officials say the coordinated response demonstrated how preparation and experience can make a critical difference when severe weather threatens the community.

Park plan, continued from page 1

"The park plan conveniently makes it look like the city is working on the park district when in turn, the public will know that this is just a way to push forward the wants of the mayor, not the needs of the residents," Altieri said. "Water is the residents' number one need."

Strategic roadmap

Mayor Lyons and Braidwood Park District Board President Scott Howard, in a joint message included in the plan, said the plan will strengthen Braidwood's ability to compete for state and federal grants by demonstrating a clear long-term vision and prioritized list of projects. Communities often must show compre-

hensive planning and public support when seeking recreation and infrastructure funding.

The planning effort was completed with assistance from RVI Planning + Landscape Architecture and city management consultant Steve Gulden with input from residents, stakeholders, city officials and park district commissioners.

With the ordinance now approved, the focus shifts from planning to implementation. Whether that means new playgrounds, improved trails, enhanced accessibility or expanded recreational opportunities, city leaders now have a blueprint for how they hope Braidwood's park system will evolve.

Don't like how the town is being run? Here's your chance to serve

Residents interested in serving in local government will soon have an opportunity to enter the race for several key elected positions in the City of Braidwood.

The city has announced filing information for the April 6, 2027 Consolidated Election, during which time voters will elect individuals to four-year terms in five municipal offices: Mayor, commissioner of accounts and finance, commissioner of public buildings and property, commissioner of streets and public improvements, and commissioner of public health and safety.

Prospective candidates may begin circulating nominating petitions on Aug. 25. Candidate filing will take place from Nov. 16-23. Petitions and related election documents must be filed at Braidwood City Hall during regular business hours, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Official candidate packets will also be available beginning Aug. 25 at City Hall.

Mayor Todd Lyons announced the filing dates during a recent city council

meeting and encouraged residents interested in public service to consider running for office.

Lyons noted that every elected position in the city's commission form of government will appear on the ballot.

"So anybody interested, every position is up - mayor, commissioner of accounts and finance, commissioner of public and building property, commissioner of streets, and commissioner of public health and safety," Lyons said.

He emphasized that all five seats are open for election and encouraged com-

munity members to participate in the process.

The upcoming election will determine the leadership of Braidwood's commission form of government for the next four years. The mayor and four commissioners collectively oversee city operations, finances, public works, public safety and municipal properties.

Residents seeking additional information about candidacy requirements or election filing procedures may contact the City Clerk's Office. The Consolidated Election will be held April 6, 2027.

Nominating petitions for Park Commissioner available at Godley Park District

PUBLIC NOTICE

Nominating Petitions Available for Park Commissioner

Nominating petitions and other filing materials for the April 6, 2027 consolidated election for the Godley Park District will be available August 25, 2026. One seat on the five-member Board of Park Commissioners for the Park District will be up for election. Park Commissioners serve six year terms without compensation.

Nominating petitions and other filing materials are available at the Park District Administrative Office, 500 S. Kankakee Street, Godley, Illinois.

The first day nominating petitions can be circulated is August 25, 2026. Filing dates for nominating materials are November 16-23, 8:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday only, at the Park District Administrative Office.

Additional information is available from Ken Sorensen, Executive Director at 815-458-6129; the Will County Clerk's Office at 815-740-4616; or the Illinois State Board of Elections at 217-782-4141, www.elections.il.gov.

Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2026.

Braidwood Park District nomination papers available for election of Park Commissioners

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that nomination papers for the election of Park Commissioners for the Braidwood Park District at the April 6, 2027, Consolidated Election will be available beginning August 25, 2026. Nominating petitions and other filing materials are available by contacting Park District Board Secretary/Local Election Official Joshua Bolatto at (815) 791-8093. Two seats on the five-member Board of Park Commissioners for the park district are to be elected at the April 6, 2027, consolidated election: Two (2) 6-year terms. The position of Park Commissioner is an uncompensated/unpaid position. The first day nominating petitions can be circulated is August 25, 2026. Candidates may file nominating petitions beginning Tuesday, November 24, 2026, and Wednesday, November 25, 2026, and Monday November 30, 2026 through Wednesday, December 2, 2026, 8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., and Thursday December 3, 2026, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. at the Park District Administrative Office, 382 North Center Street, Braidwood, Illinois. Additional information is available from: Will County Clerk's Office at (815) 740-4615; or the Illinois State Board of Elections at (217) 782-4141, www.elections.il.gov.

/S/ Josh Bolatto, Secretary
Braidwood Park District

Published in the Braidwood Journal on Wednesday, August 19, 2026.

City of Braidwood gives notice of complaint filed on 360 N. Mitchell St.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Publication Notice to: NONRECORD CLAIMANTS

The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, notice is hereby given you, NONRECORD CLAIMANTS of the following:

CITY OF BRAIDWOOD, an Illinois Municipal Corporation, has filed a four count Complaint against Defendants DELORES FISK, SHARON MELROSE, WILLIAM MELROSE, and NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS in the CIRCUIT COURT OF THE TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

Said Petition prays that the Court (1) enjoin the Defendants from occupying the structures located at 360 N. Mitchell St., Braidwood, IL 60408 ("Subject Property"); (2) order Defendants to demolish or repair or enclose the residential structure and detached shed on Subject Property within fourteen (14) days, and if Defendants fail to do so within fourteen (14) days, without further order of this Court needed, Plaintiff shall have the right to enter onto Subject Property and may immediately proceed with demolishing the structure and detached shed on Subject Property; that the Plaintiff be granted leave to record a lien against Subject Property for the cost of the demolition, repair, enclosure, or removal incurred, including court costs, attorney's fees, and other costs related to the enforcement of this action, in accordance with 65 ILCS 5/11-31-1(a); that the Court reserve jurisdiction to enter judgment in favor of Plaintiff against Defendants for the cost of the demolition, repair, enclosure, or removal incurred, including court costs, attorney's fees, and other costs related to the enforcement of this action, in accordance with 65 ILCS 5/11-31-1(a); that the Court order such other relief which the Court deems fair and just; and (3) that the Court order fines not less than twenty five dollars (\$25.00) and not more than seven hundred fifty dollars (\$750.00) for each violation, with each day a violation exists constituting a separate violation; and (4) enter a search warrant granting the Plaintiff access to enter onto Subject Property and into the residence and shed structure for the purpose of inspection, assessing the total condition of each structure, the extent of damage, and approximating costs to repair the residence and shed.

The Petition involves the following:

1. Plaintiff: City of Braidwood, an Illinois Municipal Corporation
2. Case Number: 2026CH000161
3. Court where the action is pending: Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois

4. Title holders of record: Delores Fisk and Sharon Melrose
5. Legal Description of property at issue: LOTS 1 AND 2, IN BLOCK 6, IN MCCRAGG AND FORSYTHE'S SUBDIVISION OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF SECTION 8, IN TOWNSHIP 32 NORTH, AND IN RANGE 9 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, EXCEPT THEREFROM THE COAL AND OTHER MINERAL RIGHTS BENEATH THE SURFACE AND THE RIGHT TO MINE AND REMOVE THE SAME, IN WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS.
6. Common description of property at issue: 360 N. Mitchell Street, Braidwood, IL 60408
7. The names of the parties to be served by publication: NONRECORD CLAIMANTS.
8. The date on or after which default may be entered against NONRECORD CLAIMANTS: September 18, 2026.

Notice is also hereby given you that said Petition prays for other relief, that summons was duly issued out of said Court against you as provided by law, that the said suit is now pending.

NOW, THEREFORE, unless you, said above-named Defendants, file your response to the Complaint in said suit or otherwise make your appearance therein in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, Will County, Illinois on or before September 18, 2026, default may be entered against you at any time after that day and a judgment entered in accordance with the prayer of said relief.

CITY OF BRAIDWOOD
A Municipal Corporation, Plaintiff
Bryan M. Wellner - 06321702
Attorney for Plaintiff
Mahoney, Silverman & Cross, LLC
822 Infantry Drive, Suite 100
Joliet, Illinois 60435
(815) 730-9500
bwellner@msclawfirm.com

Published in the Braidwood Journal, Aug. 19, 26 and Sept. 2, 2026.

Attorney Hanson files Cryder estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
IN PROBATE
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE
OF DAVID E. CRYDER, Deceased
Case No. 26 PR 421
CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of DAVID E. CRYDER, of Joliet, Illinois, Will County. Letters of Office were issued on August 10, 2026 to Carol Galskoy, 1507 Chigwall Lane South, Webster, NY 14580, whose Attorney is Mark E. Hanson, 116 N. Chicago St., Ste. 200, Joliet, IL 60432, (815) 727-5445 ext. 1303.

Claims against the Estate may be filed in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Clerk in the Will County Courthouse, 100 West Jefferson St., Joliet, Illinois, 60432. Or with the Executor, or both within (6) months from the date of the first publication Notice, and any claim not filed within that period is barred. Copies of a Claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the Executor and to said attorney's 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.illi.noiscourts.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.illinoislegalsaid.org.

Mark E. Hanson
116 N. Chicago Street, Suite 200
Joliet, IL 60432
Phone: (815) 727-5445
ARDC 01124501
Carol Galskoy - Representative
Mark E. Hanson - Attorney
Published in the Braidwood Journal, Wednesday, Aug. 19, 26, and Sept. 2, 2026.

Attorney Hanson files Fistler estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
IN PROBATE
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE
OF DONALD J. FISTLER, Deceased
Case No. 26 PR 422
CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is hereby given of the death of DONALD J. FISTLER, of Willow Springs, Illinois, Cook County. Letters of Office were issued on August 10, 2026 to Richard E. Fistler, 524 Adams Street, Burlington, WI 53105, whose Attorney is Mark E. Hanson, 116 N. Chicago St., Ste. 200, Joliet, IL 60432, (815) 727-5445 ext. 1303.

Claims against the Estate may be filed in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Clerk in the Will County Courthouse, 100 West Jefferson St., Joliet, Illinois, 60432. Or with the administrator, or both within (6) months from the date of the first publication Notice, and any claim not filed within that period is barred. Copies of a Claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the administrator and to said 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.illi.noiscourts.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.illinoislegalsaid.org.

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BY: s/s Mark E. Hanson,
ARDC 01124501
Richard E. Fistler - Representative
Mark E. Hanson - Attorney
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Eric D. Fisher, publisher

Murder on the Ragin' Canal, not uncommon

Today we leave Braidwood to visit Ottawa and Joliet, two of the many towns on the Illinois Michigan Canal. Out of necessity boatmen on the Canal spent several days, if not a week, away from home. Rarely did the family of boatmen come with, there just wasn't that much room. The result of that situation was the two murders that we look at today. Well, that, and that green-eyed monster - jealousy.

The first story comes from July, 1858 in the Joliet Signal but occurred in Ottawa. "Last Sunday morning, between nine and ten o'clock, our usually quiet city was suddenly thrown into intense excitement by the report that a brutal murder had just been committed. Crowds were rapidly hastening towards the scene of the murder which proved to be a small house on the side cut near the lock, occupied by Mrs. Martha A. Randall."

"The name of the murderer was Wesley A. Fisher, a boatman on the canal, the victim, his wife, Clarissa, daughter of Mrs. Randall. Fisher had known Clarissa from her youth up; some four months ago, they were married. It appears lately Fisher had become haunted with the suspicion that his wife was unfaithful, and unwilling to leave her at Ottawa while passing to and fro on his boat, he tried to persuade her to live on the boat with him."

"This she refused to do, but went to live with her mother. Whether there was just grounds for his suspicions or not is not apparent. He seems however to have



Sandy Vasko

been fully persuaded there were, and coming to town on Friday night, he stopped at a hotel, and on Saturday appears to have occupied himself in preparations for the deed on Sunday morning. He went around town and paid whatever small bills he owed, purchased a double-barreled pistol, and threw out dark hints as to the use he intended it for."

"Early on Sunday morning he went to the house of Mrs. Randall, but his courage appears to have failed him. He was gloomy and distant, but remained only a few minutes. Between nine and ten o'clock, however, he returned, and walking into the house, without a word drew a pistol on his wife. She screamed and ran out the back way, while he was seized by her mother and sister."

"He finally disengaged himself from them, and got outside just as his wife was passing out of the front gate. She either stumbled and fell, or was knocked down, when he seized her and turning her face upwards, fired both barrels in her breast. Exclaiming "Oh God, you have shot me: Lord have mercy!" she died. Fisher then ran into the canal, swam out on the other side, where a moment afterwards he have himself up to deputy Sheriff Grow, who took him off to jail"

Our next story takes place in Joliet. "The body of a man was found floating on the river basin last Thursday morning, and on being brought to shore proved to be that of Geo. Crawford, steersman on the canal boat Rosencransz commanded

by Capt. Clark. A deep gash in the throat and a stab in the shoulder were marks on the bade that at once indicated foul play. Acting coroner Wilcox was called and a jury was summoned.

"Under their direction a post mortem examination was made. This examination disclosed the following facts. The body could not have been in the water above 36 hours as no signs of decomposition were visible."

"None of the wounds were of a fatal character. Internally the examination disclosed that the lungs were free of water and had not died of drowning. The appearance of the features was not that of a drowned person Death had ensued before his immersion into the water. Nearly every rib was broken and the chest crushed in. Dr. Campbell testified at a subsequent session of the jury that these last injuries must have followed after death, a there had been no effusion of blood within. It would seem as if the body had been ground between the boat and the bank, causing no abrasion of the skin. The physicians freely admitted that during all their experience they had never been at such a loss to determine the cause of death."

"The examination showed Crawford to be a man of great strength and complete health. His stomach was full of undigested food, proving that he had eaten heartily less than four hours and probably not over two hours before death. His stomach was not that of a whiskey drinker's."

"Clark, captain of the boat, testified before the jury to the effect the deceased was a sober, reliable man. He last saw him

alive at about 3 o'clock Tuesday afternoon.

"The deceased asked permission to go to Lockport, stating that he owed a dollar there, and that he desired to pay it. Clark refused to grant the request. At night he noticed Crawford's absence, and inferred he had gone to Lockport in spite of his prohibition. His dead body was the first announcement to him of his tragic end, but had no idea ow he came to it."

"Officer Schwarz and Long testified to having heard screams proceeding apparently from the direction of the river at about 2 o'clock Tuesday night. C. Q. Osbourne who lives on Joliet street testified that he heard a piercing shriek at the same hour. The jury after holding several sessions adjourned for one week, in the hope of arriving at something more conclusive."

"Crawford was about 57 years of age, and came to this state from Canada, his relatives living near Toronto. His taking off is of the most mysterious kind, exciting much speculation. The secret apparently lies buried with him."

One week later, "Last Friday evening the coroner's jury in the case of Geo. Crawford, again met for further action and returned a verdict, which consigned Capt. Clark, of the canal boat Rosencransz, his wife and Thos. McKeegan to the county jail, to await the action of the grand jury now in session."

I don't know the end of this story, but I wish I did.

Nine new teachers join Reed-Custer classrooms

STAFF REPORT

Students weren't the only ones experiencing a first day when the doors opened for the 2026-2027 school year at Reed-Custer Community Unit School District 255.

Nine new teachers were among the smiling faces greeting students on Wednesday, Aug. 12, as classes got underway across the district.

The new educators bring a mix of experience to Reed-Custer, from first-year teachers beginning their careers to veterans with years in the classroom. They also bring some interesting backgrounds, including culinary school, college volleyball, cheerleading, farming and even a love of Edgar Allan Poe.

Here's a look at the district's newest teachers:

JESSICA ANDERSON

Jessica Anderson will teach kindergarten special education. Anderson spent four years as a paraprofessional in an intensive special education middle school classroom within the Plainfield School District while attending Grand Canyon University. Last school year, she completed her student teaching in a third-grade classroom at Reed-Custer Elementary School and then worked as a substitute teacher for the remainder of the year.

Anderson said she chose special education because she wants to help students reach their individual potential and finds it rewarding to watch them gain confidence, learn new skills and achieve their goals.

"Growing up in a small district and now working in a small district, I am excited to return to a close-knit environment and connect with like-minded colleagues. I look forward to the opportunity to grow professionally at RC and to build relationships with the building staff and colleagues," she said.

Anderson grew up and attended school in Wilmington and now lives in Diamond with her husband and their two dogs. She also coaches middle school cheerleading and is entering her fifth season. Away from school, she enjoys hiking and reading. A longtime athlete herself, Anderson was a cheerleader for 15 years and played softball for 11.

AJ BAKER

AJ Baker is teaching biology, physical science and chemistry at Reed-Custer High School, where he will also serve as freshman class sponsor and lead the science club.

A Seneca High School graduate, Baker initially took a much different career path, studying culinary arts at Joliet Junior College and working full-time in restaurants for several years.

Baker said he eventually realized restaurant work was not his calling. The death of his best friend in October 2020 helped him reconsider what he wanted to do with his life. His friend, then a freshman at the University of Illinois, had been studying to become a high school history teacher.

"Through that grieving process I realized teaching is what I was called to do," Baker said.

He returned to college, studying physics education at Illinois State University. He student taught at Streator High

School last fall and joined Reed-Custer last January.

Growing up in the area, Baker was already familiar with Reed-Custer's reputation and said he has appreciated the support from administrators and fellow teachers. Away from school, he enjoys hiking, camping, reading in his hammock, video games, board games and Dungeons & Dragons.

KRISTIN GRUNWALD

Kristin Grunwald is teaching English 10 after spending 14 years teaching seventh-grade English language arts in Palos Heights.

Grunwald graduated from Trinity Christian College in 2012 with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and also holds a master's degree in educational technology. She discovered her love for teaching after high school while giving swim lessons to children at her local park district.

She said Reed-Custer's small-district atmosphere is similar to her previous district, and she is excited about making the move from middle school to high school English.

Grunwald lives in Manhattan with her husband, Jeff, their 3-year-old daughter, Charlotte, and two dogs, Gunnar and Bella. Her interests include gardening, reading, spending time with friends and watching true-crime documentaries. She also describes herself as "obsessed" with Edgar Allan Poe and everything spooky and macabre. Grunwald previously coached cheerleading for 10 years.

KATELYN McCANN

Katelyn McCann, a Wilmington native, will teach second grade. McCann recently graduated from North Central College and completed her student teaching in a first-grade classroom.

"I decided to become a teacher because I have always enjoyed working with children and helping them learn and be the best they can be. Seeing students grow academically and grow confidence in themselves is very rewarding, and I wanted a career where I could make a difference every day," McCann said.

McCann said she was attracted to Reed-Custer by its welcoming atmosphere and commitment to students. She said she is looking forward to creating a positive classroom environment where all students feel supported, valued and excited to learn.

"I am excited to be part of a collaborative and supportive team," she said.

McCann has been involved in cheerleading and athletics for much of her life and was once asked to try out for the Chicago Bulls Cheer Team, an opportunity she ultimately turned down. She is interested in becoming involved with cheerleading or track at Reed-Custer.

MAGGIE McDONALD

Maggie McDonald is beginning her first year as a teacher in a first-grade classroom. McDonald graduated from Illinois State University in May and student taught in kindergarten at Morris Grade School. She also gained experience in preschool through second-grade classrooms and has worked as a substitute teacher in Seneca and Morris.



Courtesy photo

REED-CUSTER SCHOOL DISTRICT's new teachers for the 2026-27 school year include (front, from left) Maggie McDonald, Aubrie Pruess, Katelyn McCann and Liza Nichols. Back row: Grace Wingerter, AJ Baker, Kristin Grunwald, Emily Stratton and Jessica Anderson.

Her mother's career as a teacher played an important role in McDonald choosing education herself.

"My mom was able to show me that teaching is more than just a job, it is a commitment to building up youth in the community," she said.

McDonald grew up in Seneca and enjoys spending time with family and friends, fishing and being on the lake in Wisconsin. A sports fan, she cheers for the White Sox and Bears.

"I am excited to work at Reed-Custer this school year for the strong community mindset the district has. I cannot wait to dive into the culture and traditions that Reed-Custer has to offer. I am excited to bring my passion for education into this community as well. Collaborating with new teachers and building meaningful relationships with students are only a few of the many things I am looking forward to."

LIZA NICHOLS

Liza Nichols joins Reed-Custer Elementary School as a fifth-grade teacher. Nichols holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a master's degree in elementary education. Her experience includes three years as a paraprofessional in Lockport and Homer Glen, two years teaching third grade in Arizona and one year teaching fourth grade in Elwood.

Nichols said she has always loved school and enjoys seeing the moment when something "clicks" for a student. She had also always wanted to teach fifth grade and felt Reed-Custer Elementary School's values and emphasis on student learning and relationships matched the type of school community she wanted to join.

A New Lenox native who attended Providence High School, Nichols lives in Manhattan with her husband, Adam, and their daughter, Adaline, who was born in June, and their dog Bailey. When she has some free time, Nichols enjoys spending time with her daughter, running and reading.

AUBRIE PRUESS

Aubrie Pruess is taking over a third-grade classroom after

graduating from Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, in May. She earned a degree in elementary education with endorsements in K-8 reading and middle school math and science and completed student teaching in fourth-grade and sixth/seventh-grade math classrooms in school districts in Iowa.

Teaching runs in the family for Pruess. Her mother and grandmother both worked in education, and as a child she would pretend to teach in her grandmother's classroom.

"I have grown to have a passion for leaving a positive mark on many students' lives. I can't wait to help students foster a love of learning like I have had the opportunity to do," she said.

Pruess grew up the oldest of four on a family farm in Clarence, Iowa, and played volleyball for four years at Wartburg. She met her fiancé, Drew, at college, and his family farms in Bonfield. The couple plans to marry in April. When she isn't teaching, Pruess enjoys farm life, reading, working out, spending time outdoors and visiting national parks.

EMILY STRATTON

Emily Stratton returns to the classroom as Reed-Custer High School's new special education math teacher.

Stratton earned a bachelor's degree in special education from Illinois State University and master's degrees in special education from Eastern Illinois University and educational leadership from Lewis University. Entering her ninth year in education, she previously worked in Plainfield District 202 as a high school special education teacher in both the resource and multi-needs setting, and most recently as a dean of students.

Stratton decided to become a teacher while in high school after serving as a peer mentor for students with disabilities. She is especially pleased to be teaching in the community she calls home and looks forward to developing lasting relationships with students and families.

She lives in Custer Park with her husband and 2-year-old daughter in a multigenerational household that also includes her parents. Their 10-acre property is

home to two Highland cows, three goats and plenty of chickens. Stratton also has a particularly meaningful story to share: In July 2020, she donated a kidney to her father.

"It was a wonderful experience and I was able to give him a second chance at life so he could be present for mine and my borthor's weddings and to become a grandfather," Emily said.

GRACE WINGERTER

Grace Wingerter is teaching ninth-grade World History and will also coach freshman girls basketball. A first-year teacher, Wingerter recently graduated from Lewis University with a bachelor's degree in history and secondary education. She student taught with Mr. Wolf at Reed-Custer last year, teaching civics and economics, and previously had student-teaching experiences at Channahon Junior High and Plainfield South High School.

Wingerter's path to teaching included taking a year away from college to work and travel the country in her van. The experience helped her realize she wanted to return home and give something back to the community that helped shape her.

"I realized I wanted to be that teacher for someone," she said of the educators who made her feel comfortable enough to participate and try even when she didn't have all the answers. "I want to make students feel wanted in my class."

The Channahon native enjoys gardening, being in her backyard in Shorewood, where she lives with her boyfriend and cat named Clover, and anything outdoors. On weekends she usually rides her motorcycle with her boyfriend, and loves reading and watching history documentaries. "I always have a good book recommendation." She also recently published her first research paper in the Armstrong Journal of History.

Together, the nine newcomers entered their Reed-Custer classrooms with different experiences and backgrounds but a common goal—building relationships with students and helping them start the new school year on a positive note.

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Start paying attention

WILMINGTON— For those who live in denial, avoiding the daily unhinged events happening daily, who just "don't have time for that stuff, the everyone is does it crowd." Better start paying attention, this War thing is rapidly evolving into America is screwed for a full year or more without escalating this Distraction War with American boots on the ground. Even he isn't that stupid with midterms coming quickly and his poll numbers are atrocious at best. Independents moderate Republicans and Gen X are realizing he has showed his priorities, his senility and age and his old schtick is over. Better start thinking for yourself and your family. His last gasp is obviously "this election is rigged" bs coming from him and his cronies, as they micro-monitor every possible bs accusation every day. Just vote, strength in overwhelming numbers aren't lying.

Dumb vs smart states

SHADOW LAKES— I am reading in a magazine that the red states by contrast has the smallest increase in spending on education with Mississippi ranked number one in the nation with reading and math scores. So why is it people in Illinois and blue states put out under-achieving students while people in red states put out smart students. Can anyone answer me that? Dan Hill

Poor spoiled brat

BRACEVILLE— If Trump read the SoundOff we would no longer be able to have it. Everyone that writes in hurts his little feelings. The poor little spoiled brat.

You're a whimp

SHADOW LAKES— Watching Channel 5 News about how people can cope with stress over severe storms. It's very simple, you're a wimp. Grow up, accept it and believe in God. C'mon people. Sheri Michaels also needs to wake up. Thank you.

He is in those files

WILMINGTON—Donald J. Trump sues everyone, sues anything, sues for any reason. Reason being, you can drag it out

in court appealing and reappealing to a higher court taking sometimes years for a final outcome. Funny how thousands of people have called him a rapist and a pedophile. He won't dare sue them. Why? I know why, you know why, but I'm not afraid to say it. He is guilty of doing terrible things to innocent children repeatedly for years. He won't release those files, he is those files. Say a prayer for Trump's victims when you hypocritically go to church.

Conned again

WILMINGTON—Attention all you Trump lovers, the self-promoting World's Greatest Businessman just had the July 2026 budget results posted. In just July it has a deficit of \$432 billion, one month. America is broke and nothing to help it is coming. Can't thank you guys enough for being so foolish to be conned again. Fools use the nonsense words like communist, socialism, radical, Islam and immigrants to scare but the most frightening thing, is that Epstein pal monster currently running the destroyed White House.

Going to cut SS

WILMINGTON—Speaker of the House leader Mike Johnson is repeating his desire to cut Social Security by 20-22% across the board more and more often than ever before. If you collect \$1,000 per month new number as low as \$780. What would you do to live? Collect \$2,500 per month, new number \$1,950, what could you cut out of life at 70-years-old? This is what the Republican Party is openly saying on camera. They aren't BS'ing. They use new term entitlements instead of Social Security to fool you. Don't continue being stupid out of old habits, save yourself, help yourselves. Quit voting for a party that doesn't give a **** about your life. Enjoy whatever time you have left. Republican politicians are all about power, themselves and keeping billionaires happy for political donations.

Finally, we've been heard

BRAIDWOOD—For years, Braidwood citizens have asked for more events for our youth and families. It is wonderful to see that the city council has listened and is taking action. Thank you to everyone who volunteered to join the newly formed



Events Committee. The list of possible events sounds exciting, and I look forward to seeing these ideas become a reality. It is great to see our community coming together to create more fun and positive activities for our children and families. I can't wait to see what the Events Committee brings to Braidwood this year. Thank you to the council and all the volunteers for investing in our community and, most importantly, our youth.

Trump never served

The commander-in-chief of all U.S. military branches showed his concern for the welfare of sailors and Marines by saying that their nine uninterrupted months aboard the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln is "not nearly long enough." Coming from a man who never served his country and who has been branded as a five-time draft-dodger, I suppose that is to be expected. After all, he chastised the late John McCain, whose fighter jet was shot down over Hanoi, and for 5 1/2 years was a captive, beaten and tortured in a North Vietnamese prison. The man who thought that he knew Trump well, the late Lindsey Graham, once questioned Trump's fitness to be commander-in-chief saying that attending a military high school was no substitute for the military service that Trump avoided. "He doesn't represent my party and he doesn't represent the values that the men and women in uniform are fighting for." Trump didn't then and he obviously doesn't now.

David Kahn. Cashiers, NC

No more pork chops?

WILMINGTON—Think about this all the Muslims that are running for office are

all Democrats. No more hot dogs, no more pork chops, or bacon, no more freedom for females. Vote wisely, it's your kids and grandchildren's future.

Pizza burger, anyone?

Getting tired of all the people in SoundOff talking about politics. Can we talk about something else? How about a pizza burger?

Sue the robot surgeons

SHADOW LAKES—There was an article in the paper about robots performing surgery. There were some things that were missed. One was how do you sterilize a robot to prevent infections on patients? And what will happen if the hand of the robot shakes while cutting or if the robot cuts the wrong thing? People will sue the robot for and the hospital will say it's not their fault. You don't have to be a doctor to perform surgery, so why are they getting paid so much money? And what will happen to all the doctors in the future?

Mindless, spineless

WILMINGTON—I'm not worried about the Democratic Socialist Party. I am very worried about the mindless, spineless do-nothing Mega-Republicans who haven't passed one bill to help people with their health insurance and to help people who are barely making a living trying to survive raising a family.

JoAnn

Thanks for the veggies

BRACEVILLE—This is a little late but thanks to whoever put out a table full of vegetables on the south side of Braceville Road last year for the people who can't get out to do gardening any more.

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SHAKE, RATTLE AND FLASH — A powerful lightning strike lights up the night sky northeast of Wilmington along Peotone Road in this dramatic photo captured by Carrie Anderson around 10 p.m. Thursday. The bolt was one of many that rattled homes as a strong thunderstorm moved through the area, producing lightning strikes so loud and powerful they shook windows. The storm arrived just two days after the National Weather Service confirmed an EF1 tornado caused damage in Wilmington on Tuesday. While Thursday night's storm was not as threatening, Mother Nature still put on a loud—and brilliant—show.

IDOT approves Route 53 bridge for controversial NorthPoint expansion

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

A major hurdle for the controversial NorthPoint Development project has been cleared after the Illinois Department of Transportation approved construction of a bridge over Illinois Route 53 in the area of Breen Road in Joliet, paving the way for a significant expansion of the logistics and warehouse development in southern Will County.

The bridge will span Route 53 and connect portions of NorthPoint's sprawling property east and west of the highway. The structure is considered critical to the company's long-term plans to develop between 20 million and 30 million square feet of additional warehouse and logistics space on thousands of acres near Joliet and Elwood.

The approval allows NorthPoint to move forward with site work, including mass grading operations, following upcoming zoning proceedings.

NorthPoint will fund the estimated \$14 million project and will be responsible for its ongoing maintenance.

The bridge has been a central component of NorthPoint's vision for the property for years. The developer has argued that the crossing would keep truck traffic associated with the logistics park off Route 53, allowing vehicles to move between facilities without entering the state highway.

NorthPoint's plans have generated intense debate across Will County for nearly a decade. Residents, environmental advocates, and local officials opposed to the project have repeatedly raised concerns about increased truck traffic, air pollution, noise, road congestion and the loss of agricultural land.

The opposition move-

ment, often organized under the banner "Say No to NorthPoint," drew large crowds to public meetings throughout the approval process.

Portions of the development have already been constructed west of Route 53, where several large industrial buildings are in operation. The newly approved bridge is expected to unlock future development east of the highway and accelerate buildout of what could become one of the largest logistics parks in the Midwest.

Supporters of the project have long pointed to the potential for job creation and increased tax revenue, while critics maintain that the long-term impacts on transportation infrastructure and nearby communities remain unresolved.

With IDOT's approval now secured, attention is expected to shift to local zoning decisions and the next phase of construction planning.

Gas prices creeping ever-so-slightly higher

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have risen 7.5 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$4.28/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

In Wilmington, gas prices range from \$3.88/g at Mohsen, up to \$4.09/g at Shell.

Braidwood's gas stations are at \$4.19/g, and Coal City is charging \$3.99/g across the board.

In Morris, expect to pay anywhere from \$3.89/g (cash) at BP, up to \$4.24/g at Amoco.

Finally, Bourbonnais Gulf is charging \$4.06/g up to \$4.59/g at Kroger.

"Average gasoline prices climbed back above \$4 per gallon over the last week, with prices rising in slightly more states than they fell, as rebounding oil prices driven by the continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz and ongoing Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries kept upward pressure on the market," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"Diesel felt the pressure even more acutely, rising in all but a few states, as Ukraine's attacks on Russian refining infrastructure continue to impact refined product prices more than crude oil itself. While the seasonal transition to cheaper winter-blend gasoline in the coming month could bring some relief, the two dominant challenges facing motorists — the closed Strait and the ongoing refinery strikes — show no signs of resolving anytime soon. Until they do, the path for gas and diesel prices remains tilted to the upside."

The lowest price in the state Sunday was \$3.76/g while the highest was \$5.99/g, a difference of \$2.23/g.

Prices in Illinois are 12.8 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 89.7 cents per gallon higher than a year ago.

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OBITUARIES

Donna Calhoun

BRAIDWOOD—Donna Jean Calhoun, 70, of Braidwood, formerly of Braceville, passed away Friday, Aug. 14, 2026, at the University of Chicago Medical Center.

Born Feb. 18, 1956, in Joliet, Donna was the daughter of Mae (Reynolds) Byerley and the late Charles Byerley. She was raised in Braceville and graduated from Gardner South Wilmington High School with the class of 1974. On March 6, 1976, Donna married Michael William Calhoun at Braceville United Methodist Church. Together, they made their home in Braceville before moving to Braidwood, where they raised their daughters.

Donna was a lifelong and devoted member of Braceville United Methodist Church, and her faith was of deep importance to her. She worked for several years at Jemco before gaining employment with Hollywood Casino, where she spent 25 years as a Quality Assurance Technician. Donna demonstrated her love through acts of service, whether volunteering at Kuzma Care Cottage in Wilmington or sharing handmade gifts with those she loved. She enjoyed baking, gardening, and crocheting and often used those talents as another way to care for others. Donna was also a die-hard Chicago Cubs fan and faithfully followed and supported her team until the very end.

Though she struggled with her health these past few years, she attended to every challenge with poise, quiet grace, and faith. Donna demonstrated her determination on a regular basis to live her life to the fullest, and being present as a loving and devoted mother, daughter, Nana, sister, and aunt to her family. The family wants to extend their deepest gratitude to all of the family members and friends who helped make the final chapter of Donna's life as full as it could be.



Survivors include her mother, Mae Byerley and three daughters: Pam (Bill) Raber, Katie (Brandon) Johnson, and Samantha (Nick) Montgomery; three grandchildren: Bobby (Miki) Raber, Amelia Johnson, and Everett Montgomery; one brother and three sisters: Linda (Mike) Schott, Charles Byerley, Patricia (the late Fred) Wood, and Sharon O'Donnell; two sisters-in-law, Susie Byerley Flowers and Juanita (Manuel) Yeates; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Donna was preceded in death by her father, Charles Byerley, and her husband, Michael W. Calhoun; two brothers, Robert and Clyde Byerley; and two brothers-in-law, John Mack and John Yeates.

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

The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Road, in Wilmington on Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2026 from 4 to 7 p.m. Funeral services will follow at Braceville United Methodist Church, 106 W. Gould Street, on Thursday, Aug. 20, 2026 at 12 p.m. Inurnment will follow at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, where Donna will be laid to rest with her husband, Michael.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Donna's memory to Braceville United Methodist Church, 106 W. Gould St., Braceville, IL 60407, or Kuzma Care Cottage, 635 S. Main Street, Wilmington, IL 60481.

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

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

Diana D. Vestal

MORRIS—Diana D. Vestal, 50, of Morris, passed away on Monday, Aug. 10, 2026 at Lightways Hospice in Joliet, surrounded by her loved ones.

She was born on July 27, 1976 in Chicago to Dallas and Mary (nee Hager) Napier. She grew up in the Channahon and Minooka areas, graduating with Minooka High School class of 1994. Diana married the love of her life, Jacob Vestal, on Dec. 5, 2003 at The Mansion in Dwight. Together, they made their home in Morris and Coal City and raised their two sons.

A true entrepreneur, Diana was a partnered owner of Distinct Visions and Salon Trends as a beautician, Boutique Clothing stores in Coal City and Morris and Digital Design Vinyl and Print. She was a devoted BMX Racing mom and enjoyed traveling to her son's competitions, volunteering to make banners and stickers and photo-



graphing the riders. There was no end to Diana's creativity and her passion. She found great joy in her businesses and with her family. She also counted many friendships along the way in her life.

She is survived by her husband of 22 years, Jake and their two sons, Damen and Gaven. Several aunts and cousins also survive.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Visitation was held Friday, Aug. 14, 2026 at the Ferrari Funeral Chapel in Coal City.

Cremation rites were accorded following the visitation.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guestbook at www.ferrari-funeral.com.

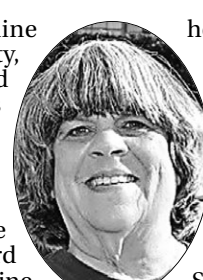
Ferrari Funeral Services of Coal City were entrusted with arrangements.

Jeanine Congalton

FULLERTON, CA—K. Jeanine Congalton, formerly of Coal City, currently of Fullerton, CA, passed away unexpectedly earlier this month, she would have turned 70 later this month. Raised in Coal City, where she was an honor student, she completed her undergraduate degree at Illinois State and still counted her Redbird friends in her closest circle. Jeanine earned her M.A. at North Dakota State where she briefly taught early in her career before completing her Ph.D. at the University of Utah, where she created her strongest personal and academic relationships.

After three years at California State University-Fresno, Jeanine spent the bulk of her career at California State University, Fullerton, where she became an institution, for many years coaching their successful forensics program. Her forensics service was vast, having served as District/Chair of the American Forensics Association's National Individual Events Tournament, where she was a fixture on the tournament tabulation staff and was bestowed with their Distinguished Service Award in 1997. She was a favorite judge on the National Debate Tournament circuit and coached numerous students to national tournaments. She was an officer in the International Forensics Association for a decade and worked in tabulation rooms at hundreds of forensics contests at all levels.

Jeanine was the unsung hero of the Human Communication Studies department at California State University, Fullerton, serving perpetually on personnel, graduate, and search committees copiously combing through hundreds of files, and meticulously reviewing adjunct and graduate student instructors. Despite all her dedicated service, her clear legacy was her students. She was a devoted teacher, paying special attention to those students with extra challenges, creating in them a sense of self-confidence and success. During the pandemic she would drive to her campus parking lot to connect to university wi-fi, teaching classes from



her car. She followed the careers of generations of her students, even if that meant showing up at an 8 a.m. convention panel or drafting volumes of thoughtful letters of recommendation. Many, if not nearly all, institutions in southern California likely have at least one instructor who was trained and mentored by Jeanine. Scores of her students comment that she's the role model for how they conduct their lives, both professionally and personally. Her idea of work/life balance was taking a stack of papers to grade on the grounds of her beloved Disneyland, where she valued and regularly used her annual pass. Jeanine was a lifelong fan of the Chicago Cubs, Bears, and Blackhawks, and a season ticket holder to CSUF Titan baseball, where her second home was Goodwin Field.

She was a dedicated aunt, attending countless soccer, lacrosse, and baseball games of her nieces and nephews. The U.S. Postal Service has been kept solvent by her mailing greeting cards for every known occasion, always including a dollar bill, to her sphere of friends, mere acquaintances, their families and extended networks. Nearly everyone she met made it into her address book. Jeanine was generous to a fault, always being the first to "treat" whoever she was visiting.

She is survived by her sister, Donna (Roger) Hanley, of Tampa; sister-in-law, Kris DiPaolo, 10 nieces and nephews, numerous great-nieces and nephews and a wide circle of friends who remain in shock at her unanticipated passing.

Jeanine was preceded in death by her parents, Pete and Catherine (Kay) DiPaolo, formerly of Coal City and brother, David, of Corona, CA.

A celebration of life will be hosted on Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 at 3 p.m. in room CBE/SGMH 1502 at California State University, Fullerton, where she leaves many saddened colleagues and associates. Memorials can be made to the CSU, Fullerton Jeanine Congalton Scholarship already established in her honor.

Thomas R. Buban



GODLEY—Thomas R. Buban, 85, of Godley, passed away Sunday, Aug. 16, 2026 at Lightways Inpatient Hospice in Joliet.

Born March 30, 1941, in Chicago, Thomas Richard was the son of Thomas and Anne (Hajcak) Buban. He moved with his family from Chicago to Godley at an early age, attended Saint Rose Parochial High School with the class of 1959. Following high school, Tom attended Winona State University in Minnesota before entering the United States Marine Corps. He proudly served from June 1961 until his honorable discharge in June 1964.

On July 13, 1968, Tom married Linnea Hudziak during a Mass celebrated by Father Burns at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Braidwood. Together, Tom and Linnea made their home in Godley, where they raised their family and shared more than 56 years of marriage.

A devoted Catholic, Tom was formerly a parishioner of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Braidwood and was currently a member of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Coal City, where he enjoyed serving at Mass.

Following his service in the Marines, Tom began a career with United Parcel Service. Starting as a delivery driver, he worked his way into management before taking an early retirement. He later worked for the Godley Park District and was always willing to lend his skills as a handyman to friends and neighbors. Tom also served his community as Mayor of Godley.

Farming remained an important part of Tom's life for nearly all of his years. In more recent years, he devoted much of himself to caring for his wife, Linnea, a role he took on with steadfast love and dedication.

Tom was a hardworking, straightforward man who knew what he liked and was rarely persuaded otherwise. He had a wonderful sense of humor, a willingness to



help those around him, and above all, a deep love for his family. He will be remembered for the life he built, the people he helped, and the family he loved.

Survivors include his children, Lisa (Steve) Pitts, of Wilmington and Tom Buban, of Chicago; grandchildren: Devin Pitts and Abby Pitts; nephews: John and Michael Slanicky and niece, Rosanne Whyte.

Tom was preceded in death by his parents, wife, Linnea on March 30, 2024 and his sister, Theresa Slanicky.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Reeves Funeral Home, 75 N. Broadway (one block north of Illinois Route 113) in Coal City on Thursday, Aug. 20, 2026 from 4 p.m. until time of time of memory sharing and recitation of the Holy Rosary at 7:30 p.m.

Funeral services will follow Friday morning, Aug. 21, 2026 at 11 a.m. in Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, 215 S. Kankakee St. in Coal City. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated with Reverend Josh Miller presiding and Deacon William Dunn assisting. A memorial luncheon will be provided in the Berst Hall of Assumption Parish at the conclusion of the Mass, and burial with full military honors will be held at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood at 2:30 p.m. Tom will be laid to rest with his late wife, Linnea.

Preferred memorials may be made as Masses in Tom's memory or to Lightways Hospice, 250 Waterstone Circle, Joliet, IL 60431.

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

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

U.S. corn crop ratings decline two weeks in a row

BY DANIEL GRANT
FARMWEEK

US corn condition ratings dipped another 2 points to 61% in the good-to-excellent category in USDA's latest crop progress report released Aug. 3.

It marks two straight weeks of declines following a 4-point drop in the July 27 crop progress report. The portion of the corn crop rated good to excellent is now 12 points below the same time last year.

The rest of the corn crop is currently rated 25% fair and 14% poor to very poor nationwide.

The portion of soybeans rated good to excellent Aug. 3 was unchanged from the previous week, at 63%, but down 6 points compared to the same time last year. The remaining US bean crop is currently rated 28% fair and 9% poor to very poor.

"Right now, we're at a transition point for these crops," Rich Nelson, chief

strategist at Allendale Inc. in McHenry, told FarmWeek. "If the weather forecast (of more regular rain showers) holds true, it could be a strong finish and could repair some of the earlier (crop) damage."

So, how much weight do the sinking crop ratings have on the market, particularly ahead of USDA's much-anticipated crop production report Aug. 12?

"Crop ratings are not exactly the best measurement for final yields, but there is a relationship there and they do a good job predicting what direction USDA may go (in its first yield estimates of the year Aug. 12 using farmer survey data)," Nelson said.

"If you use the ratings by themselves, our numbers would imply we could see a 1.9% yield hit, with an average yield of 179.6 (bushels per acre nationwide for corn)," he continued. "But our weather data would imply a yield closer to 181.5."

USDA's initial yield

estimates heading into the August report pegged national average yields at 183 bushels per acre for corn and 53 for soybeans.

"There's a lot of questions still ahead," Nelson said. "The markets are not trading that (yield) number (implied by lower crop conditions). The market is trading slightly above trend yield."

Commodity firm StoneX on Aug. 4 estimated US corn production at 16.16 billion bushels with an average yield of 184.8 bushels per acre, well above USDA's estimate, with an average soybean yield of 53 bushels. Allendale Inc. will conduct its annual farmer survey about crop expectations Aug. 17-28 and results will be announced the first week of September.

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow

Fossil Ridge Library News

Children & Toddler Programs

Tuesday, Aug. 25
Play-Doh Playdates, 10:30-11 a.m. Play-Doh workshop. Display your creativity using our Play-Doh and tools. For Children ages 2-6.

Thursday, Aug. 27
Toddler Time, 10-11 a.m. We welcome toddlers and their caregivers to join us weekly to explore various toys and sensory materials. Toddlers can enhance their gross and fine motor skills, social interaction, and language skills. Caregivers must accompany their little ones, registration is required

Braidwood blood drive scheduled for September 17

The City of Braidwood will host its next community blood drive on Thursday, Sept. 17, from 2 to 6 p.m. in the meeting room at Braidwood City Hall, 141 W. Main Street.

Pre-registration is highly recommended, although walk-in donors will also be accepted.

To register, please visit the online registration link provided by the city or contact Blood Drive Coordinator Josh Bolatto at

(815) 458-2342 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

As part of Versiti's September donor promotion, individuals who donate blood will be entered into the Fire Up Your Team Sweepstakes for a chance to win a Chicago Fire FC VIP Team Experience. Participants must be at least 18-years-old to be eligible for the sweepstakes.



Photo by Catrina Rawson of FarmWeek

US CORN CROP ratings declined each of the past two weeks, just ahead of USDA's crop production report Aug. 12.

Symerton Homecoming 2026

Tues, August 18 Elwood vs. Symerton—16" Softball game @ 6 pm
Weds, August 19 Manhattan vs. Symerton— 16" Softball game @ 6 pm
Thurs, August 20 Manhattan vs. Elwood —16" Softball game @ 6 pm
Car/Vintage Tractor Show 4:30-7:30 pm (WEATHER PERMITTING)
Fri, August 21 The Southside Social Club Live Band on the patio—7:00 pm
Sat, August 22 "The Equals" Live Band @ 7:00-10:00 pm on the patio
Volley Ball Tournament Reg. 10am - Start 10:30
Sun, August 23 Tractor Pull @ noon North side of the park
Kiddie Pedal Pull—Register @ 1 pm/pull starts @ 2 pm
Ice Cream Truck 12 noon—2 pm and "Ice Ice Baby" icees
Billy Gray Music—3:00 pm

Sunday: All day long: Kids activities, face painting & games, animal petting zoo and show, 50/50 raffle and drinks and food at Symerton Tap and Grill.

⇒ Mr. K's Chuckwagon (Serving Saturday from 11 am—8 pm & Sunday 11 am—6 pm)



Presented by:
The Village of Symerton

Symerton Homecoming 2026

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Photo by Eric Fisher
A SECTION OF the rooftop at Tire Tracks, 507 W. Baltimore St, was lifted away by 100 mph wind or possible tornado on Tuesday around 11 a.m. Nearby buildings were mostly spared as debris from the powerful blast fell across two parking lots to the east.

Berkot's power restored after storm, Tire Tracks faces a longer recovery

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

The severe storms and tornado activity that swept through the area Aug. 11 left their mark across Will County, forcing temporary closures at several local establishments.

Among the larger businesses affected were Berkot's Super Foods locations in Braidwood, Wilmington, and Peotone, all of which lost power during the storm. Company officials said the closures were caused by electrical outages rather than structural damage to the stores.

Teamwork saves the day

The Wilmington Berkot's location reopened Aug. 13 at 2 p.m. after power was restored and employees completed extensive food safety and recovery procedures.

"We are fully open, fully operational now," said Assistant Manager Madeline Evans. "We had a massive recovery team, spectacular employees that helped us make sure that we took care of all of our freezer items, our cold items, dairy, meat department. We did everything by the book, taking care of our food to make sure we lost as little as possible and kept everything safe and healthy for our customers."

Evans said employees worked through an enormous amount of recovery

work to prepare the store for reopening.

"I had come in for my shift and then volunteered the following day to help with getting everything back how it's supposed to be," she said. "We had to follow our guidelines. Basically the same way that we get our freezer items in is how we have to get them right back."

She credited employees across the store for stepping up during the crisis.

"Please ensure that you put in how grateful we are for all of our employees," Evans said. "I cannot stress that enough. We've had people working jobs they've never worked before, going above and beyond. We are just so grateful for everyone who's helped."

Safe evacuation, no injuries reported

A spokesperson at the Braidwood Berkot's said the store regained power late Aug. 13 and immediately began restocking shelves and inspecting inventory.

"We just got power back late last night (Aug. 13), so we're in the process of getting the store restocked," he said.

The Braidwood store has since reopened.

The spokesperson was working when the outage occurred and said customers were inside the store when power was lost.

Fortunately, everyone exited safely and no injuries were reported.

One of the hardest-hit commercial properties was Tire Tracks Auto Care at 507 W. Baltimore St. in Wilmington. According to the National Weather Service, the auto repair shop was the precise point where an EF-1 tornado first touched down Tuesday morning.

The tornado, with estimated peak winds of 90 mph, ripped away a substantial portion of the building's roof and scattered debris into a neighboring strip mall, causing additional damage. Witnesses described the scene as resembling a "war zone" in the hours after the storm.

Despite the destruction, Tire Tracks' parent company, GreatWater 360 Auto Care, said all employees escaped without injury.

"It's been a tough week for our shop and the community," the company said in a public statement. "We were hit hard by Mother Nature, and while our building sustained significant damage, we're incredibly grateful to share that everyone is safe."

The Wilmington Tire Tracks location remains closed while company officials evaluate repairs and reconstruction options. Customers with appointments have been directed to the company's Bradley and Manteno locations.

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Wilmington EST. 1926
THE ISLAND CITY, ILLINOIS

Nobody in Springfield is automatically entitled to a decade at the top

After Michael J. Madigan's 36 years as Illinois House Speaker, a ten-year term limit on current and future speakers doesn't seem like a lot of time in the big chair. Except it is.



CAPITOL FACTS

Rich Miller

Nobody prior to Madigan had ever served ten years as speaker in this state going back to when Illinois became a state in 1818. The only person who came close was Republican Warren Wood, who held the position for eight years in the 1950s.

Most of the rest served single terms or two terms. Democrat Paul Powell, served six years, including two years before Speaker Wood and four years after. Powell became infamous for stashing cash in shoe boxes at his Springfield hotel residence and died with an estimated fortune of \$4.6 million. But I digress.

Another Democrat, Bill Redmond, also held the gavel for six years, although the future Speaker Madigan held quite a bit of sway over him in the late 1970s.

Two Republicans served as speaker for six years each in the early

1900s. But that's about it.

Republican George Ryan was speaker for two years before he was tapped to be Gov. Jim Thompson's running mate. In the 1930s, four different members (three Democrats and one Republican)

held the gavel for just two years each. 47 out of 70 House Speakers served two years or less (four days in the case of George Ryan's Majority Leader Art Telcser).

What I'm getting at is ten years is actually a long time. More importantly, though, the ten-year ceiling has also somehow become a floor — an expected decade-long entitlement.

House Speaker Chris Welch has obviously fully intended to serve the full decade since he was first elected to the chamber's top job for a two-year term in 2021. You may have noticed that a couple of his members who spoke out early about his mishandling of the Harry Benton sexual harassment matter suddenly went silent. That was no coincidence.

Pressure is being exerted on the rank and file. His team wants those ten years.

But a decade with the gavel is not only historically unique, it's also longer than the average service time for House Democratic members, which is currently 8.4 years. That's up a bit from a six-year average in 2020, according to the Statehouse's unofficial honorary historian (title I just made up) John Amdor. But it's still below the ten-year House Speaker term limit.

Starting in the final two decades of the previous century, the Senate has a history of electing Senate Presidents to multiple terms. Democrat Phil Rock held the Senate's gavel for 14 years. Then, Republican Pate Philip served ten years before the Democrats won the right to draw the new district map in 2001.

Democrat Emil Jones was the chamber's top person for six years, and was replaced by Democrat John Cullerton for 11 years. Current Senate President Don Harmon was first elevated in 2020, but he's eligible to serve until 2031 because that first year after Cullerton resigned mid-term doesn't count toward the chamber's ten-year term limit.

Before Phil Rock, most Senate Presidents served just two to six years, except for the ten years that Republican Sen. Art Bidwell held the gavel from

1955-1965,

One of the reasons that House Speakers and Senate Presidents served such short stints was that party dominance wasn't assured like it has been for the past several decades. Partisan majorities flipped back and forth much more before the advent of computer-driven redistricting.

Republicans and Downstate Democrats would also occasionally scheme to prevent Chicago from holding power in their chambers (which is how Paul Powell was first elected speaker).

I'm not advocating here for reducing the term limits to six years or whatever. But what I am saying is that Illinois government will not crash and burn if Speaker Welch and Senate President Harmon don't serve their full five two-year General Assemblies as their chambers' leaders.

They should both have to earn each and every one of their two-year terms. A ten-year stint should not be considered the minimum length of service. If their members want both of them to stick around, that's their decision, as long as they recognize that nobody is automatically entitled to a decade at the top.

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

New law requires all pharmacies to display 988 Crisis Lifeline information

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

A new Illinois law sponsored by State Rep. Jackie Haas is aimed at making life-saving mental health resources more visible by requiring pharmacies across the state to display information about the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. This bipartisan measure will help those most in need by requiring pharmacies to display signs with information about the lifeline.

House Bill 4982 was recently signed into law by Gov. JB Pritzker following bipartisan approval in the Illinois General Assembly. The legislation requires pharmacies to post signs with information about the statewide 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, along with other mental health awareness and assistance

resources.

Haas said the measure is designed to connect more Illinois residents with help during a mental health crisis.

"On Friday (July 31), House Bill 4982 was signed into law," Haas said in a statement. "This bipartisan measure will help those most in need by requiring pharmacies to display signs with information about the statewide 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, as well as other awareness and assistance information. This will ensure more Illinoisans are aware of the important, life-saving resources our state offers."

She also thanked lawmakers from both parties for supporting the legislation.

"I am incredibly thankful for the bipartisan support this bill received, and look forward to continuing my work on this important issue," Haas said.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides free, confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for people experiencing mental health crises, suicidal thoughts, or emotional distress. The service also offers assistance to individuals concerned about a loved one.

Supporters of the legislation say pharmacies are

well-positioned to help raise awareness because they serve people of all ages and often interact with individuals managing both physical and mental health conditions.

By placing 988 information in a highly visible location, the law aims to make it easier for people to find help when they need it most.

DAR prospective member workshop

The Kankakee Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution is hosting a free workshop Saturday, Aug. 29 from 9:30 a.m. to noon at the Bradley Public Library where experienced genealogists from our State Lineage Team will be available to help trace your family's history and determine your eligibility for Daughters of the American Revolution membership.

Attendees should bring any genealogy records they have on paper or computer. If you are 18 years or older and believe your lineage can be traced to a patriot who supported the cause of American independence, we hope to see you there.

For additional information, contact Lee Ann Hollenbeck, (815) 592-4058, Registrar, Kankakee Chapter, NSDAR.

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Line Ads are up to 30 words (20¢ for each word over 30)
1 wk.- \$17; 2 wks.- \$21;
3 wks.- \$25; 4 wks.-\$29*
\$1.00 Extra per line for bold or caps on classified
*plus .0399% with credit card



The Braidwood Journal — The Coal City Courant — The Free Press Advocate

HELP WANTED

Help Wanted: Bob's Advanced Auto & Tire, Inc. Seeking lube technician for our high volume auto repair shop. Must have drivers license. apply within at 60 E. Chestnut St. Coal City. 815-634-0004

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.

STORAGE

PUBLIC STORAGE
Clementine's Closets
815-530-0200
- No Deposit -
Starting at \$50
515 Davy Lane, Wilmington

SERVICE & REPAIRS

A Thousand Words Photography
385 N. Second Ave. Coal City
Mandy Eaton
815-791-2913

Bubbles Cleaning Service

Dawn Boardman Business and Home Cleaning Service. Weekly, bi-weekly, monthly. Many references available. Please leave message 815-661-6180. cc28-56

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. cc19-44

WANTED

WANTED SCRAP METAL

- Farm Machinery
- Garden Tractors
- Snowmobiles
- Appliances
- Anything Metal

Free pickup
7 days
815-210-8819

REAL ESTATE

SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE of **319 N KANKAKEE ST, WILMINGTON, IL 60481** (not applicable). On the 27th day of August, 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: **NEWREZ LLC D/B/A SHELLPOINT MORTGAGE SERVICING Plaintiff V. MARC OSMANSON; BREANNE OSMANSON; PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS; STATE OF ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE; CHICAGO TITLE LAND TRUST COMPANY D/B/A THE LAND TRUST COMPANY, AS TRUSTEE; SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS;** Defendant. Case No. **25 FC 1093** 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: **ANSELMO LINDBERG OLIVER LLC. 1771 W. Diehl Rd. Suite 120 NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS 60563 P: 630-453-6960 F: 630-428-4620** 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., Aug. 5, 12, and 19, 2026

Climate change and wine production

Dear EarthTalk: Has climate change already had any significant impacts on wine production around the world?
-Wendy Baumgarten, Dubuque, Iowa

EARTH TALK

Questions & Answers About Our Environment

Eight out of the ten hottest years on record have occurred in the past decade. Thus, it is no surprise that rising global temperatures have had a significant impact on wine production.

One study by the University of British Columbia (UBC) found that temperatures during the wine growing season have drastically increased around the world. "That kind of change can affect harvest times, grape ripening, and thus the taste of the wine," reports UBC's Elizabeth Wolkovich, one of the study authors.

One aspect of wine production that climate change has affected is the growing cycle. Warmer temperatures lead to the growing cycle happening earlier. In fact, budding, flowering, fruit-set, veraison (when the grapes begin to ripen and change color), and harvest all take place around ten days to two weeks sooner than normal. This leads to higher alcohol levels, lower acidity levels, and less refined tannins, all of which affect taste.

Hot temperatures during the growing season also make it more difficult for those who grow wine to achieve balance in the fruit. During the winter, mild temperatures lead to vines coming out of dormancy quicker and becoming more vulnerable to frost as a result.

Global warming has also increased weather disasters. As vines are one of the most weather-sensitive agricultural crops, weather catastrophes can be detrimental. Smoke from wildfires can easily cover vineyards and ruin wines, a phenomenon that has already occurred in the U.S., Australia, and South Africa. A shortage of rainwater can decrease the fruitfulness of wine production, while hail can be extremely destructive.

Droughts and wildfires, both of which have become more common due to climate change, have therefore negatively affected the quality of harvests.

Amid this crisis, one study published in the

journal Nature Reviews Earth and Environment shows that around 90 percent of coastal and low-altitude regions in California may be unable to produce good wine if global warming exceeds +2°C, reducing the growable surface area of wine.

With increasing temperatures reducing grape crops and the quality of wine, researchers estimate that up to 70 percent of the world's suitable wine regions will become too warm for production by the end of the century. That said, a warmer climate is expected to boost production in 25 percent of current wine regions.

Winemakers have begun taking adaptive measures. For instance, new grape varieties are being used as they are better suited to climate change. Growers can also plant on differently oriented slopes that receive less sun and more wind, or slopes at higher altitudes to mitigate temperature increases.

While these measures may come at high costs, they are now crucial to preserving the prosperity of wine production worldwide.

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

Things your family should know in a medical emergency

Ten things every family should know in a medical emergency.

- Learn CPR before you need it.
- Call 911 immediately. Don't wait to "see if they get better."
- Put your phone on speaker. This lets you keep both hands free while following the dispatcher's instructions.
- Unlock the front door before EMS arrives and send someone outside to meet first responders.
- Know where the nearest Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is. Many schools, gyms, churches, airports, community centers, and office buildings have them.

- Create a family emergency plan. Decide in advance who will call 911, meet first responders outside, gather medications and medical information, and care for children or pets.
- Make sure your house numbers are visible at night.
- Teach everyone in the family where emergency medications are stored.
- Talk with older relatives about their medical history and wishes before an emergency happens.
- Keep a current list of medications, allergies, and medical conditions in an easy-to-find place.

Culligan - Help Wanted - Route Driver

*Responsible for delivering any of our products directly to our customers. The following is a general list, though you may be asked to deliver additional items not listed.

* 5 gal. water * 3 gal. water * 80# & 50# bags of salt * 5 gal. peroxide * Coolers * Cased Water

- A route driver must be able to routinely lift up to 80 lbs.

- Responsibilities include organizing your route in an efficient manner; operating a forklift; maintaining load manifests and any other vehicle documents.

- The following are mandatory requirements the route driver must pass and maintain:

*Must maintain a class C driver's license with an excellent driving record.

*Ability to pass and maintain the motor vehicle background check, the criminal history background check and routine and random drug tests.

Building a strong relationship with customers is a vital function of this position.

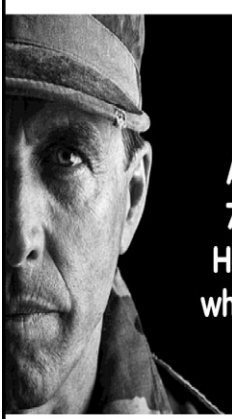
Apply within: Culligan, 75 W. Chestnut St. Coal City

Juster earns dean's list

Carthage College in Wisconsin recognizes Chase Juster from Wilmington, for his academic achievement and being named to the Spring 2026 Dean's List.

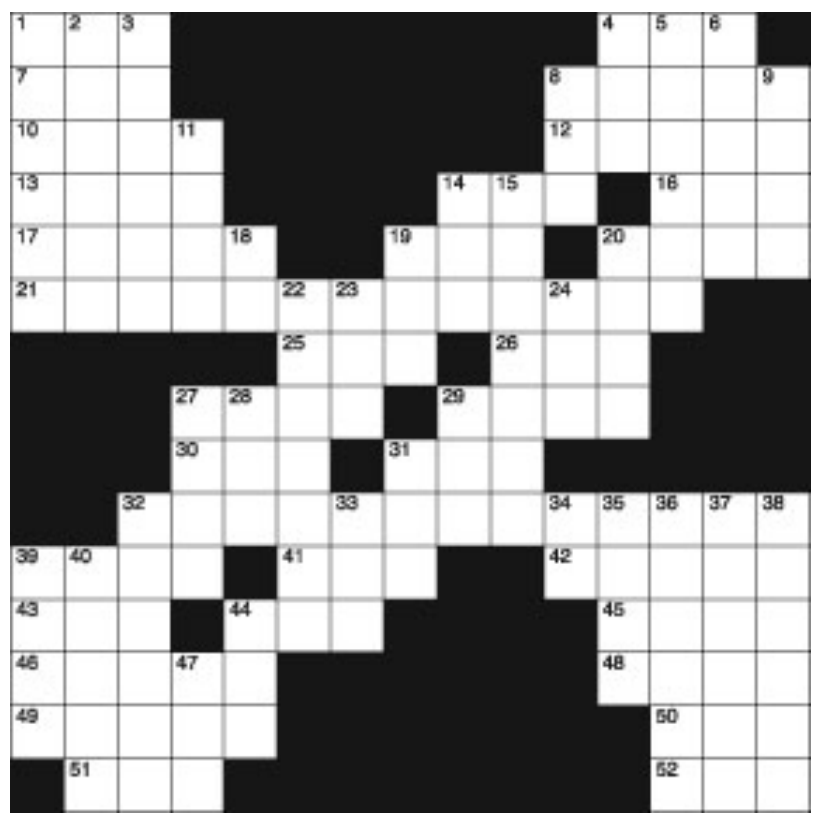
Dean's List honors are accorded to Carthage students who achieve a minimum 3.5 grade-point average.

HELP FOR VETERANS



BE THE ONE is the suicide prevention part of the American Legion. Vets can call: 779-206-8391, The Wilmington Help Line to talk with a Veteran who has had PTSD. There is help, only a phone call away.

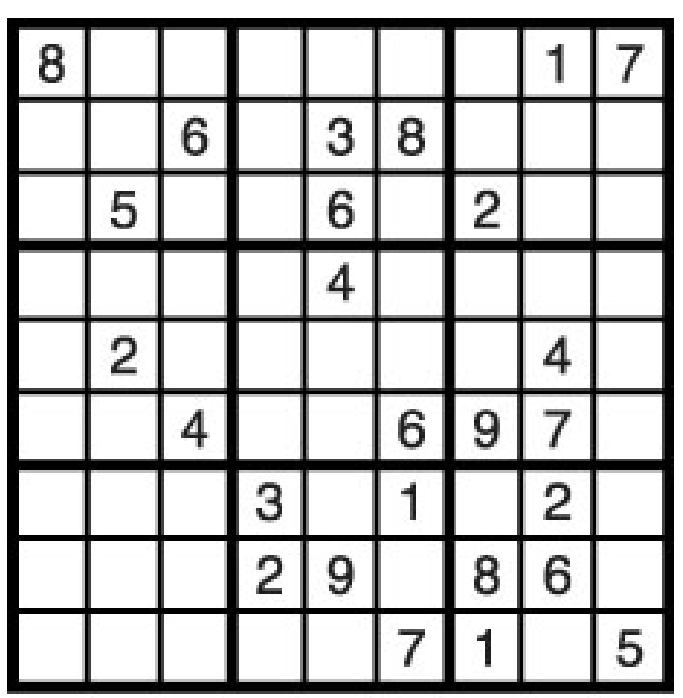
In an emergency call the Veterans CRISIS LINE 988 THEN PRESS 1



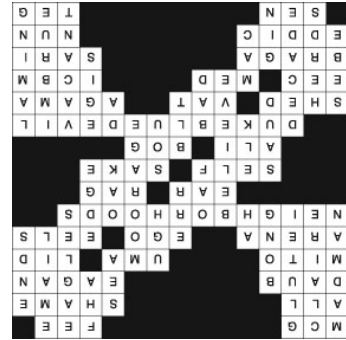
- CLUES ACROSS**
 1. Microgram
 4. Fixed charge
 7. Each
 8. Feeling of humiliation
 10. Coat with sticky substance
 12. Powerful "Severance" family
 13. Japanese city
 14. "Pulp Fiction" actress Thurman
 16. Hat
 17. Place where rockers work
19. Psyche
 20. Snakelike fishes
 21. Where people live
 25. Body part
 26. Old towel
 27. One's essential being
 29. Japanese alcoholic beverage
 30. Boxing's GOAT
 31. Wet muddy ground
 32. Christian Laettner is one
 39. A place to store lawn tools

41. Large tub for liquid
42. Old World lizard
43. One-time European member group
44. Healing student
45. Nuclear weapon
46. "Kiss of the Spider Woman" actress Sonia
48. Silk garment
49. About some Norse poems
50. Woman religious community member
51. Congressman (abbr.)
52. Two-year-old sheep

- CLUES DOWN**
 1. An insane person
 2. "Homeland" actress Danes
 3. Buttock muscles
 4. US federal agency
 5. Birds of prey
 6. Electronic communication
 8. Ocean
 9. Terminates
 11. Low-pitched sound from a bell
 14. Exclamation: yuck!
 15. A place to attach a boat
 18. Exclamation of surprise
 19. Make a mistake
 20. Border line
 22. Have religious faith
 23. Klutz
 24. Large tree
 27. House of ___ rulers
 28. Red deer
 29. Small coin (French)
 31. Popular sandwich
 32. 10-year period
 33. Not good
 34. Government lawyer
 35. Egypt's intelligence agency
 36. Without an occupant or incumbent
 37. Stain with one's hands
 38. Crippling
 39. One point east of southeast
 40. Large, united groups
 44. ___ and cheese
 47. Alcoholic beverage



Level: Intermediate



Comets hoping to build on last year's success

BY JIM SHELTON
SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

Year one of the Joe Turek era was a step in the right direction for Reed-Custer football. They matched their win total from the previous two seasons combined (4-5) and finished as team 259 out of 256 playoff teams.

"I think two goals that we can put together, and that we have put together is it's time for somebody to knock on the door of Wilmington and Coal City and maybe claim that third spot in the conference. It's kind of been a revolving door."

"I think we're inching towards getting towards the top of that middle tier. And then playoff-wise, I think hosting that first round playoff game would be a good goal to have for us."

Junior Kaiden Klein (wide receiver/defensive back) and senior Jesse Tresouthick (quarterback/defensive back) have accepted leadership roles this season and their speed can change a game in an instant.

"We kind of relied on those explosive plays from Klein and Tresouthick a bit offensively. It's good to have that luxury. We know we can pop one at anytime and as long as we limit those defensively, there's a good chance for us to potentially score in bunches."

"Tresouthick's a very quiet kid. He is a listener. He will hear everything that we're saying. You won't hear a whole lot from him, but this summer he's actually been a little more vocal than he normally has, which is great."



Photo by Angela Rose

MEET THE COMETS—Players on the Reed-Custer football team come out arm-in-arm during the Meet the Comets night held Friday. The Comets will open the season Friday at Harvard High School before hosting St. Teresa Decatur on Aug. 28.

And if he keeps doing that, he's just going to add another asset to what he brings. And we're definitely looking to ride him for sure as a senior."

Juniors Eddie Bryan (wide receiver/defensive back) and Nate Vogler (running back/linebacker) will be key contributors on both sides of the ball.

"Bryan has been standing out for us and Vogler has had a really nice summer and started for us as a linebacker last year."

"Going along with a senior group who's looking to kind of prove themselves, and then our juniors and a couple sophomores who are up and coming and looking like they're ready."

Junior linemen Jon Claassen and Hayden Garcia along with junior Trent Boudreau (running back/linebacker) and sophomore Sam Crotty

(running back/linebacker) will be stepping into prominent roles.

"Claassen and Garcia have really been pushing themselves and grinding since January in the weight room. They're going to be stepping in up front for us. If we can solidify up front on both sides, I think we could be okay," said Turek.

"Boudreau is going to be in defensively and potentially rotating in on offense and Crotty is for sure going to be on defense and contributing on offense as well."

"We definitely have some talent to work with. They don't have a whole lot of varsity game reps outside of that main core from last year, but they're working. They're pushing. They know their time is up and they will be ready to roll."

The Comets have three of their first games

on the road and navigating that stretch could be challenging with the lack of varsity experience for some guys.

They open at Harvard who went winless last season and was shut out by R-C 34-0 last year, before hosting a St. Teresa team that went 3-6 a season ago.

Illinois Central Eight conference play opens with consecutive road games at Streator and at Manteno.

"Last year, we played zero games on grass. This year five of the nine are on grass. Harvard will be a nice start for us, longer road trip, kind of get all the kinks out. Streator and Manteno Mantino are two bigger games for us to kind of iron out that middle of the ICE."

The conference goes through Wilmington and Coal City until someone proves otherwise, but the

middle of the conference should be competitive.

"Weekly games between us Herscher, Manteno, Peotone and Lisle can be pretty competitive. We're happy to be in that mix and we want to keep pushing towards the top. It's looking like Manteno should be strong. Peotone was pretty young last year and they should be formidable."

Last year, those games against Manteno, Peotone and Herscher were all decided by six points or less.

A change to this year's schedule is the IHSA expanding the playoffs, adding 128 teams, 16 in each class. The top 16 teams will receive a first-round bye. The season is also starting one week earlier which limits practice time before Week 1.

"Overall, it feels a little rushed, but things are

moving in the right direction. The expanded playoffs would have been a nice boost for us last year so the system could be a good thing for a possibility like that," said Turek.

"We have our competitive conference obviously so we could potentially be one of those teams that people are talking about that could get in and maybe make some noise."

"I see the negatives as well. I'm not sure if we were on the high end and get a bye that we'd love that or if we're struggling and we somehow sneak in. I don't know if that would be a total win anyway. So there's pros and cons, but we're definitely going to try to control what we can control and make the most of it."

What's been the biggest difference between this year and last for Turek?

"I think this year's group adapts a little quicker and understands things a little faster which has allowed us to move forward a bit even though the calendar and schedule hasn't worked out like we hoped."

"We're just continuing to harp on this group the passion and the pride part which is something that last year's group did have. They may not have been the most talented or the most intelligent on the field, but they played with passion and pride every single time they put pads on."

"This group's doing that too, but if they put it all together, they're picking up the part that we kind of lacked last year and that could be a dangerous thing for us, which is a good thing."

Reed-Custer Fall sports schedules

VARSITY FOOTBALL

Aug. 14...host Meet The Comets... 5:30 p.m.
Aug. 15...host Fall sports pictures... TBA
Aug. 21...@Harvard... 7 p.m.
Aug. 28...host Decatur St. Teresa... 7 p.m.
Sept. 4...@Streator... 7 p.m.
Sept. 11...@Manteno... 7 p.m.
Sept. 18...host Coal City... 7 p.m.
Sept. 25...@Peotone... 7 p.m.
Oct. 2...host Herscher Homecoming... 7 p.m.
Oct. 9...@Wilmington... 7 p.m.
Oct. 16...host Lisle... 7 p.m.
Oct. 23...IHSA Playoffs... TBA

FRESHMAN FOOTBALL

Aug. 14...host Meet The Comets... 5:30 p.m.
Aug. 15...host Fall sports pictures... TBA
Sept. 7...@Streator... 5:30 p.m.
Sept. 14...@Manteno... 5:30 p.m.
Sept. 21...host Coal City... 5:30 p.m.
Sept. 28...@Peotone... 5:30 p.m.
Oct. 5...host Herscher... 5:30 p.m.
Oct. 12...@Wilmington... 5:30 p.m.

VARSITY GOLF

Aug. 14...host Meet The Comets... 5:30 p.m.
Aug. 15...host Fall sports pictures... TBA
Aug. 18...host Peotone/Silver Oaks... 4:15 p.m.
Aug. 19...@Seneca w/Serena... 4 p.m.
Aug. 20...@Lisle/River Bend GC... 2:45 p.m.
Aug. 24...@Seneca invite/The Creek... 1 p.m.
Aug. 25...@Herscher/Oak Springs... 4 p.m.
Aug. 26...host Wilmington & Grant Park @Silver Oaks G.C... 4:30 p.m.
Sept. 1...@St. Anne/Oak Springs... 4:30 p.m.
Sept. 2...@BBCHS Kankakee Elks... 4:30 p.m.
Sept. 8...host Manteno/Silver Oaks... 4 p.m.
Sept. 10...@Coal City/Cinder Ridge... 4:15 p.m.
Sept. 15...host Streator w/Westmont Senior night / Silver Oaks... 4:15 p.m.
Sept. 18...@Grant P Invite/Min. Monesse 1 p.m.
Sept. 21...@IL Central Eight/Wolf Creek... 9 a.m.
Sept. 24...@Dwight Inv. Var./Dwight CC... 1 p.m.
Sept. 25...@Will Co. Inv. Var./Wedgewood... 12:30 p.m.
Sept. 29...@IHSA Regionals GIRLS... 9 a.m.
Sept. 30...@IHSA Regionals... 9 a.m.

BOYS SOCCER

Aug. 14...host Meet The Comets... 5:30 p.m.
Aug. 15...host Fall sports pictures... TBA
Aug. 25...@Serena... 4:30 p.m.
Aug. 29...@CC Tourn. / vs Morris... 10 a.m.
Aug. 29...@CC Tourn. / vs Peotone... 11:30 a.m.

Sept. 1...@Streator... 4:30 p.m.
Sept. 3...@Manteno... 4:30 p.m.
Sept. 5...host Beecher... 10 a.m.
Sept. 9...@Bishop McNamara... 6:30 p.m.
Sept. 15...host Coal City... 6 p.m.
Sept. 16...host Grant Park/ Senior night... 6 p.m.
Sept. 17...@Peotone... 4:30 p.m.
Sept. 19...host St. Anne... 10 a.m.
Sept. 22-23-24 & 26 @Rivals Cup/ Manteno TBA
Sept. 28...@Rich Township... 5 p.m.
Sept. 29...host Herscher... 6 p.m.
Oct. 1...@Wilmington JV... 4:30 p.m.
Oct. 3...@Fisher High School... 10 a.m.
Oct. 6...host Lisle... 6 p.m.
Oct. 8...@Clifton Central... 4:30 p.m.
Oct. 10...host Watseka... 10 a.m.
Oct. 16...IHSA Regional... TBA

GIRLS VARSITY VOLLEYBALL

Aug. 14...host Meet The Comets... 5:30 p.m.
Aug. 15...host Fall sports pictures... TBA
Aug. 24...@Serena... 7 p.m.
Aug. 25...host GSW... 7 p.m.
Aug. 26...@Dwight... 7 p.m.
Sept. 1...@Streator... 6 p.m.
Sept. 3...@Manteno... 6 p.m.
Sept. 7...host Marquette Academy... 7 p.m.
Sept. 8...host Coal City... 6 p.m.
Sept. 10...@Peotone... 7 p.m.
Sept. 15...host Indian Creek... 6 p.m.
Sept. 16...host Herscher... 6 p.m.
Sept. 19...@Sandwich invite V only... 9 a.m.
Sept. 21...host Seneca... 6 p.m.
Sept. 22...@Wilmington... 7 p.m.
Sept. 24...host Lisle... 6 p.m.
Sept. 26...host Lady Comey Classic... 9 a.m.
Sept. 29...host Streator... 6 p.m.
Oct. 1...host Manteno... 6 p.m.
Oct. 5...host Pontiac... 6 p.m.
Oct. 6...@Coal City... 6 p.m.
Oct. 8...host Peotone... 6 p.m.
Oct. 13...@Herscher... 6 p.m.
Oct. 15...host Wilmington Senior night... 6 p.m.
Oct. 20...@Lisle... 6 p.m.
Oct. 26...IHSA Regionals... TBA



Photo by Angela Rose

THE REED-CUSTER Cheer team is introduced by coach Lexi Stewart during the Meet the Comets night on Friday.



Chalk the Walk for students

THE BRAIDWOOD AREA Healthy Community Coalition was determined students arriving at Reed-Custer Schools last week for the first day of the new school year would be greeted with a positive message. Volunteers managed to get some great messages and artwork while chalking the walk at the Middle School and High School, but the Elementary School was rained out as Mother Nature apparently had her own plans. Apparently sidewalk chalk and a derecho are not natural allies and much of the chalk washed away, but the community support behind it didn't. "Thank you to everyone who came out, shared our posts, planned to participate, or simply cheered the idea on. We'll call this one Chalk the Walk: Extreme Weather Edition and try again next year," said Danita Morgan of the Coalition. Pictured is Rachel Lawler, volunteer lead for the Coalition.



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