



BRAIDWOOD JOURNAL .COM

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A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER • (815) 476-7966

Land purchases by Constellation creating concern for Essex residents

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

Officials are expecting such a large crowd for Thursday's Village of Essex meeting that it has been moved to the community center on Parls Street.

That's because word of a major data center and large solar farm have been spreading around town and on social media. Seems the quiet village of Essex may not stay quiet anymore.

Residents believe a major data center will soon be constructed just west of the village on or near the site of the former High Point Golf Course.

Some also believe a couple of village leaders had access to information that led to them selling their private property for millions of dollars.

In late July, posts on the unoffi-

cial Essex Facebook Page, "Little Town of Essex 2.0" was brought to this newspaper's attention.

On July 28, Riley Edwards shared a post on the Facebook page.

"While residents are kept in the dark, Constellation Energy has been quietly buying up land—and the people cashing in are the very trustees who are supposed to represent you," Edwards said.

Edwards noted that Village Trustee John Bohac sold his house and 1.9 acres for \$1.5 million. Edward Foley, owner of the former High Point Golf Course, sold 170 acres to Constellation for \$17 million.

Rumors of the possibility of a data center being built on the site of the defunct golf course began flying, as did rumors of those in positions of power profiting.

'We know nothing!'

A quest to learn the truth led this newspaper on a wild goose chase. Our first step was to find residents willing to talk. One resident agreed to speak to us under the veil of anonymity, but later changed their mind.

Essex Mayor Peter Dvorak, on August 11, claimed to have no information on the sale of the golf course and other transactions.

FOIA requests to Kankakee County and to the Village of Essex has yielded nothing.

Joanne Langlois, Freedom of Information Officer with Kankakee County replied with "Kankakee County has no responsive documents pertaining to your request," Langlois wrote.

Emily Dockery, Essex City Clerk,

SEE ESSEX CONCERNS PAGE 2



photo by Rose Panieri

ERIC ALLEN, BRAIDWOOD'S new Chief of Police (left) was sworn in by Braidwood Mayor Todd Lyons on August 26.

Grand opening Sept. 25

Federated Bank opens in Braidwood

Federated Bank's fifth branch, now serving Braidwood, is officially open for business at 130 N. Washington Street in Braidwood.

The bank will celebrate a grand opening event on Thursday, Sept. 25, with details coming in the near future.

According to CEO David Albin, the new location means more than just opening another bank.

"This expansion is more than just a new location—it's a reflection of our enduring commitment to the agricultural heritage and close-knit communities that define our region," Albin said. "Our updated logo, featuring an ear of corn, symbolizes growth, tradition, and heartland values—principles that

SEE FEDERATED BANK PAGE 2



Courtesy photo

FEDERATED BANK, LOCATED at 130 N. Washington Street, is open for business.

Eric Allen takes the helm as new police chief

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

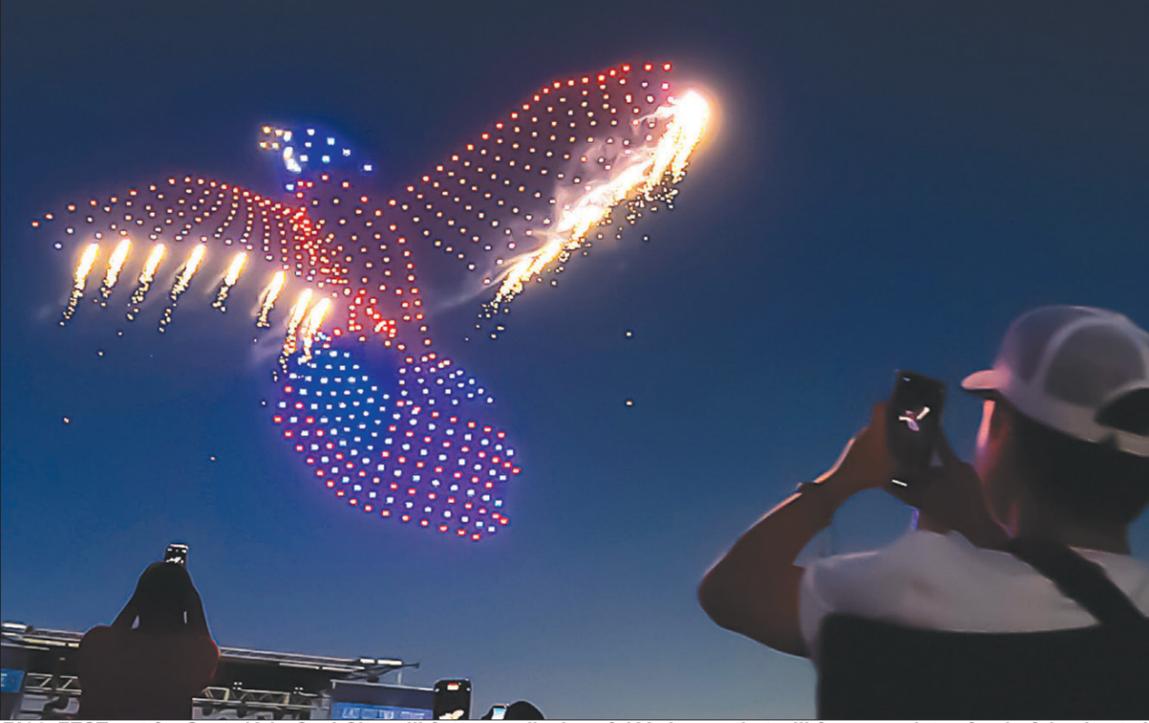
At the Tuesday, Aug. 26 Braidwood City Council meeting, Mayor Todd Lyons swore in the city's new chief of police, Eric Allen. Allen served with the Shorewood Police Dept. since 1999, most recently as deputy chief.

Allen's family, including his wife, Joy, were at city hall to witness his official swearing in. Colleagues from Shorewood came to wish

Allen the best of luck.

"I'm excited about working with you," Allen said. "You've got a great mix of veterans and younger officers... Lastly, I want to thank [Sgt.] Chris Altiery...I knew within minutes of talking to him that he does a lot of stuff around here in the police department. I've seen that in the last couple of days... He did everything he could, knowing I was the new chief coming in, to get

SEE CHIEF PAGE 2



FALL FEST, set for Sept. 13 in Coal City, will feature a display of 100 drones that will form a variety of colorful animated designs as part of the village's yearly celebration. Sky Elements, a Texas-based production company that specializes in drone light shows, will present the display. The photo shows the latest pyrotechnics Sky Elements has used at other venues across the country. It will be a first drone show of its kind for the area.

Coal City to host a show you've never seen before

BY MIKE LOOMIS
CORRESPONDENT

A drone show will light up the skies at an upcoming event in Coal City.

Fall Fest, set for Sept. 13, will feature a display of 100 drones that will form a variety of colorful animated designs as part of the village's yearly celebration.

Sky Elements, a Texas-based production company that specializes in drone light shows, will present the display.

Coal City's village board of trustees at their Aug. 25 meeting approved a contract to pay Sky Elements \$17,500 for the Fall Fest performance. The company will present a customized, 15-minute aerial display set to a soundtrack, using a space south of the railroad tracks

and west of Broadway Street as a launching area, Village Administrator Matt Fritz explained.

Coal City also booked Sky Elements to present a drone light show next summer to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the USA's independence.

That display – scheduled for June 27, 2026 - will include 150 drones at a fee of just under \$25,000.

"By moving forward at this time, we can contract with them and make sure they're available for both dates," Fritz told the trustees.

"We've been talking

SEE DRONE SHOW PAGE 2



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CONGRATULATIONS TO NINE Reed-Custer HS students who received national recognition from the College Board by being earning awards by excelling in the classroom. (from left) Ana Smith (SR), First-Generation, Rural and Small-Town, and School Recognition Awards. Kirstin Klein (JR), Rural and Small-Town and School Recognition Awards. Zach Markle (SR), School Recognition Award. Ethan Morrison (SR), School Recognition and Rural and Small-Town Awards. Mark Martinez (SR), First-Generation, Rural and Small-Town, and School Recognition Awards. Skylar Zebell (SR), First-Generation and School Recognition Awards. Tanner Gehris (SR), First-Generation, Rural and Small-Town, and School Recognition Awards. Olivia Tilley (SR), First Generation Recognition Award. Awards are based on a GPA of 3.5 or high and outstanding performance on PSAT or AP exams.

Essex concerns,

continued from page 1

had a bit more to say, stating that Constellation has not submitted anything about zoning relief or other approval. She shared that the corporation doesn't normally keep the city council apprised of such developments.

"The Village does not get advanced notice of Constellation property purchases, and like everyone else, we don't know about a purchase until Constellation provides a deed with the Kankakee County Recorder," she shared.

Dockery kindly reached out to Constellation on our behalf. The corporation responded:

"We have purchased land near our Braidwood facility over the last year, but no decision has been made on the future use of this property."

An anonymous source said Constellation began buying up land around the village's Timber Edge subdivision and near the golf course in June.

Though Constellation says it has no specific plans for the land, the corporation sealed an agreement with Meta (formerly Facebook) to supply nuclear energy to Meta's AI centers in Illinois on June 25.

The 20-year nuclear power purchase agreement (PPA) with Constellation for the output of the Clinton Clean Energy Center will begin in 2027.

According to Nuclear Newswire, Constellation's agreement with Meta allays concerns that the Clinton plant would have to close after the expiration of Illinois' ratepayer-funded Zero Emission Credit program.

Meta is said to be aggressively expanding its data center infrastructure. The company currently maintains 28 data centers, with 75 additional centers in the works. This includes a major data center in DeKalb of over 23 million square feet. Meta has invested over \$1 billion in the DeKalb campus since 2020.

What to expect

Traditionally, data centers have required massive amounts of water for cooling. However, Meta utilizes more efficient liquid cooling technologies, including closed-loop systems that recirculate coolant without high water consumption.

That's still a concern for Village of Essex residents who are hoping for more insight during Thursday's 6:30 p.m. meeting.

Like residents, this newspaper is in the dark. If and when we learn more about the plans for Essex, we will report on it.

Chief, continued from page 1

me going forward."

Allen was selected as Braidwood's new police chief, replacing Brett Goodwin, who retired in April.

A panel of three separate Chiefs of Police from Will County conducted the initial interviews, unanimously selecting Allen as their first choice.

Braidwood City Council agreed that Allen was the most appropriate candidate for the position.

"Chief Allen brings over 25 years of law enforcement experience and a distinguished record of leadership, training, and community engagement to the Braidwood Police Department," Lyons said

in July.

Allen began his career in law enforcement in 1999 with the Shorewood Police Department. He rose quickly through the ranks, from patrolman to deputy chief. During his tenure, he played a critical role in modernizing department operations, strengthening school safety initiatives, and leading regional emergency response teams.

He oversaw policy

development, internal affairs investigations, and high level coordination with local, state, and national agencies.

Allen earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice at Illinois State University, and has completed advanced leadership programs through Northwestern University as well as the University of Virginia.

Federated Bank,

continued from page 1

continue to guide us as we move forward."

To mark this milestone, Federated Bank is offering a special Certificate of Deposit (CD) promotion available exclusively at the Braidwood branch.

"It's our way of saying thank you and welcoming our new neighbors with a strong start toward financial growth," Albin said. "As we embrace this new chapter, we remain grounded in the same values that have defined Federated Bank for generations."

Albin said he and his colleagues look forward to serving the city of Braidwood, what Federated offers that other banks do not is personalized care and dedication.

Federated Bank is a subsidiary of Longview Capital Corporation, a bank holding company based in Newman, Illinois.

Longview Capital Corporation had total assets of \$1 billion. For additional information about Longview Capital Corporation, please visit longviewcap.com.

Founded on Jan. 16, 1918, as Onarga State Bank, Federated Bank was issued a charter by the State of Illinois. As of September 30, 2024, Federated Bank operates five branches in Braidwood, Onarga, Loda, Chebanse and Bradley, Illinois.

The banks lobby will be open Mondays through Wednesdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursdays, 9 a.m. to noon, Fridays 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Saturdays, 9 a.m. to noon.

Drive-Thru hours are Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Fridays, and 8 a.m. to noon Saturdays.

For information call (815) 458-5220, or visit federatedbank.com.

Public feedback continues on ordinance enforcement

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

The topic of rules and regulations popped up again during the Aug. 26 Braidwood City Council meeting even though it wasn't officially on the agenda.

During public comment, Mike Budzinski, owner of Premier Auto Detailing, LLC, approached the council with concerns over an incident that occurred on July 21.

Budzinski was working on a Braidwood resident's car when a code enforcement officer asked him for a business license and permit. When he attempted to explain that he was not a contractor and didn't need a license or permit, he was kicked off the job.

"Josh Bolatto [police department administrative staff] tells me no changes have been made on the rules, but now for the FOIA for the city of Braidwood, you guys tell me you need an extension..." Budzinski said. "If no changes have been made, why do you need an extension?"

Budzinski said that he was told permits are required to protect residents.

"If someone scams a homeowner, that's going to be on the homeowner to take them to small claims court," Budzinski said. "The city of Braidwood is not getting involved with that

at all."

Bobbie Earling also approached the council with issues of the grocery tax, water testing, violations, and favoritism. In August, Earling received four citations for vehicles and trailers on his property. "Seems there's a lot of favoritism going on if you know the right people," Earling said. "I must not know the right people."

Commissioner Wietting had his own observations about ordinances, sharing that he has observed members of the council breaking the very ordinances that are being enforced.

"If we are going to ask everyone to obey the ordinances, we can't violate them ourselves," Wietting said.

Administrative consultant Steve Gulden assured residents that other than tweaking one ordinance to include campers and boats, the city council has not revised existing ordinances. However, he emphasized the city is strictly enforcing ordinances already on the books.

Addressing the issue of vehicle detailers needing to obtain a permit to work in Braidwood, Mayor Todd Lyons recommended taking a closer look at the ordinance, and possibly amending it.

"It's from 1996, did they even have mobile car detailers in 1996?" Lyons said.

It was agreed that the ordinance will be discussed

at the Sept. 9 Meeting of the Whole. At a future date, the ordinance may be revised.

The council approved a motion to award the road bid amount of a base bid \$267,091.10 and an alternate bid of \$318,727.65 to P.T. Ferro for road improvements to Stacey Court, Vita Lane, and Third Street.

During public comment, former city administrator Tony Altiery said the city was overpaying for road construction projects. Later he explained that when he was working for the city, there were already tentative plans for the projects.

"My estimate to do this was between \$175,000 and \$200,000, if I would have supervised this project," Altiery claims.

Comcast contract renewal

The council approved an agreement with Comcast, as part of the 100-year contract between the city and Comcast.

Non-conforming property

The city also approved an ordinance between the city and owners of property located at 69 W. Main Street, finding the property is legal non-conforming. The property has been owned by Donald and Nora Vercelote and Vincent Vercelote since August 2023.

The owners submitted a request to the city to find that the property is a legal non-conforming lot because the accessory structure without a princi-

pal structure existed prior to Sept. 1, 2008 as required by the Braidwood Code of Ordinances.

Expenses

Bill payment of \$176,189.57 and payroll of \$86,667.11 were approved by the council.

Expenses included payment of \$30,817 for Water/Sewer, \$26,500 to auditors, \$14,305.27 for zoning, and \$42,169.44 for the police department.

The city's general fund is operating at a \$919,000 surplus. The city, across all governmental funds has recognized revenue of \$2.5 million and expenditures of \$1.1 million. The net change in fund balance is a surplus of \$1.4 million.

The council approved two motions to appropriate the sum of \$830,000 and \$250,000 of the Motor Fuel Tax Fund from prior years.

Police Statistics

Commissioner James Mikel provided police department statistics from August 12-25. There were 320 total calls, 29 case reports with eight arrests and 14 charges. Police made 92 traffic stops with 39 citations, 47 written warnings, two semi-truck violations and eight parking tickets.

In other business:

A bid of \$137,780 to Midwest Salt was approved. The salt is to be used for water softening.

If you have trees with branches that extend over or into the roadway, please trim the branches to facilitate snow plowing this winter.

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OPEN HOUSE
141 W. Main St., Braidwood, IL 60408
Braidwood Town Center

The City of Braidwood cordially invites you to attend an open house at Braidwood City Hall regarding the Braidwood Town Center Project located between N. Railroad and Mitchell St., also known as "Rossi Field." The open house is scheduled for:

Date: September 10, 2025
Time: 6:30 p.m.
Place: City of Braidwood Council Chambers
141 W. Main St., Braidwood, IL 60408

The purpose of the open house is to:

- Discuss the OSLAD grant requirements
- Present plans for the Braidwood Town Center
- Provide an opportunity for public comment and input

The event will be conducted informally, with the city representatives present to discuss the project. The open house will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will remain open until 8:00 p.m. for the public to learn more about the project and ask questions, and provide feedback. For more information, contact:

Mayor Todd Lyons
City of Braidwood
141 W. Main St., Braidwood, IL 60408
Phone: 1-815-458-2333
mail to: tlyons@braidwood.us

Persons who require auxiliary aids and/or services should contact the City Hall office at 1-815-458-2333 at least one (1) week prior to this open house if possible.

Drone show,

continued from page 1

about the 250th...there's going to be a lot of things happening, it's not too early to start [planning], Mayor Dave Spesia added.

Billed as the largest drone show provider in the nation, Sky Elements was a finalist on season 19 of America's Got Talent and holds several Guinness World Records for their creative light shows.

In addition to the drone show, Fall Fest's activities include a car show, crafts from area artisans, a variety of food vendors, games in Campbell Park, and live music by Fine Tunes Center for the Arts and Southbound Chicago. Megan's Mission Foundation will also hold its yearly 5k run/walk.

For more information see the insert in this week's paper.



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Eric D. Fisher, publisher

The one-legged sheriff of Will County

Hardy is a word that is usually used to describe early settlers in any part of the country. But in Robert Huston's case, it just doesn't say enough. Let's look at the life of the one-legged Sheriff of Will County.



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

Robert Huston was born in New York City on August 7, 1844 to Irish immigrants Robert and Elizabeth Huston. His father was a weaver back in Ireland, but in New York he scrambled to make a living. Searching for a better life, the Huston's came west in 1850, settling on a farm near Gardner.

Despite his small size, only 5' 4" at age 18, the younger Robert turned into a tireless farm worker. When the War Between the States broke out he was only 15, but as soon as he could he enlisted in Company I, 58th Illinois Voluntary Infantry.

He fought at the battles of Fort Donelson and Pittsburg Landing in Tennessee. He was taken prisoner at Pittsburg Landing and taken south to Richmond, but within a few months was released in a prisoner exchange and returned to his old regiment.

At the battle of Yellow Bayou in Louisiana, he was shot in the leg, causing it to have to be amputated. He was sent to the hospital in St. Louis where he remained for almost a year. He was mustered out in 1864 when he returned home to the family farm.

Huston was always proud of his service record and a fierce patriot. He helped to found the Phil Kearney chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic and served as its first commander.

Not being fit any longer for heavy farm work, he went to school on a scholarship for veterans and received his teaching degree. After teaching for a year he found it was not for him either. With \$54 in his pocket he moved to Braidwood, working at first for the coal companies as a weigher. He speculated in coal, buying low, selling high making enough money at it to purchase a general store.

His store did well, but he did not seem to be good at advertising. His simple ad in the Wilmington Advocate just said, "Robt. Huston has an excellent stock of goods in store, perhaps the finest ever

brought to our city. It will pay our friends to call and see the bargains he is constantly offering."

In April of 1879 he was elected Alderman of Braidwood, beating out about 20 other candidates. He dominated the city council proceedings, with the other Aldermen following behind, so much so that the Braidwood City Council became known as "Huston's wax figures." Three months later his business smarts had people talking about making him Will County Treasurer, but he lost out to a more influential man from Joliet.

Having lost a leg himself, he was always trying to help those who had been injured and found it difficult to work. We read in 1880, "Wm. Bell injured twice within two years, and unable to work in the mines, will dispose of his three horse, wagon, and buggy by raffle, on Tuesday eve, 26th, at John Walker's place. Tickets, at 50 cents each, are on sale at Huston's store, and elsewhere. Those who buy them will aid a worthy citizen."

In 1882 Huston was appointed Postmaster of Braidwood. This job paid \$1,800 per year, (about \$59,500 today). With this salary he purchased the new Kellogg building on Main Street. Here he set up a new store to "better serve

the customer" and moved the post office there as well. This was a common practice before the law that required the post office to be in one federally owned building.

We also know that he held the mortgage on the local newspaper, the Braidwood Republican, and when the paper fell behind in payments; Huston had the printing press and effects seized by the sheriff. He soon became the owner and publisher.

Despite this, he remained a popular man. Folks honored him for his part in the war, and when services were held in 1885 to honor the passing of General Ulysses S. Grant, he served as President of the Day, and honoree. In 1885 he ran for Supervisor of Reed Township but was defeated by John Kain. That didn't deter him; he quickly threw his hat in the ring for Sheriff of Will County on the Republican ticket.

His popularity county-wide assured him the election. In April of 1886 the little one-legged man from Braidwood was elected Sheriff of Will County. He moved into the Sheriff's house, next to the jail in Joliet. He made his local boys deputies; they included Kelso Ballantine and Thomas Moore.

He was a no nonsense

sheriff, conforming to the letter of the law. In 1886 he made himself very unpopular in his hometown when he enforced the ban against prize fighting. We read on December 18, 1886 in the Wilmington Advocate, "Sheriff Huston has proclaimed that the advertised prize-fight between Daly, of St. Louis, and Myers, of

Streator, to be held in Music hall on Dec. 28, shall not take place within Will County. The "pugs" named were to fight eight rounds for \$500 a side."

In an age when losing a limb usually meant a life of poverty, Robert Huston not only survived, but prospered by using his other God given talents.

Fossil Ridge Library News

Adult Programs

Monday, Sept. 8-E-mail Basics, 10-11:30 a.m. Join our friendly staff as they guide you through the essentials of using e-mail with confidence. In this beginner-friendly session, you'll create your own Gmail account and learn key skills including: Composing, sending, receiving, and organizing e-mails; uploading and attaching documents; understanding the difference between CC and BCC; recognizing and managing spam; searching for messages; organizing and deleting emails.

Tuesday, Sept. 9-Well-Read Book Club, 1-2 p.m. Dive into thought-provoking reads and engaging discussions with the Well-Read Book Club. We'll explore books that challenge your perspectives each month and ignite meaningful conversations. Join us and connect with fellow book lovers.

September's Title: The Secret Life of Sunflowers by Marta Molnar. Copies are available at the front desk or online in our digital consortium.

Tween Programs

Monday, Sept. 8-Tween Scene-Decorate your own Travel Tray, 5:30-6:30 p.m. Get crafty and customize your very own travel tray. Perfect for

snacks, art projects, reading, or road trips, these trays will be uniquely yours. We'll provide all the decorating supplies.

Children and Toddler Programs

Friday, Sept. 5--Movies on the Green-Dog Man, 7-10:30 p.m. A movie night under the stars? Join us on the lawn of the Fossil Ridge Public Library as we watch Dog Man (2025). Seating begins at 7 p.m., and the movie begins at dusk. Popcorn and light refreshments will be served.

Sept. 9 and 23-Play-Doh Playdates, 10:30-11 a.m. Join us for a Play-Doh workshop. Display your creativity using our Play-Doh and tools. This program is for children aged 2-6, and registration is required.

Sept. 10, 17, 24-Little Learners, 10-10:45 a.m. Join us each week to listen to stories, dance to music, and conclude with a snack and a craft corresponding to the week's color. The activities focus on emergent literacy skills. While the activities are geared towards preschool-aged children, older and younger siblings are welcome to join.

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

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT
REED-CUSTER HIGH SCHOOL
WOULD LIKE TO RECOGNIZE
Gwen Stewart
SEPTEMBER 2025

R-C Senior Spotlight shines on Gwen Stewart

The Senior Spotlight winner for the month of September is Gwen Stewart.

Gwen is the daughter of Robert and Stacey Stewart. During her high school career, Gwen was involved in Band, Jazz Band, Pep Band, Solo and Ensemble, ICE Band, RPO, Academic Challenge Team, World Culture Club, RC Chatter, SSA, Math Team, Madrigals, ICE Leadership Conference and Fall Musical. She was also a 2x Conference Champ, Regional Champ, Sectional and State Qualifier in Speech, a POPS Group Leader, President of the Student Council, a Class Officer, a Student of the Month, an ACE winner, a Freshman Class Attendant, Co-President of NHS and was on the High Honor Roll.

She was also Honorable Mention All-Area, All-Academic, and All-Conference in Basketball, and was a Soccer Captain, as well as All-Area, All-Academic, All-Conference, All-Regional, and All-Sectional, and is a school record holder in Soccer (most goals scored).

Her future plans are to attend a 4-year university with hopes to play soccer, to study pre-law and to become a lawyer.

Here are a few thoughts from Gwen's teachers.

Mrs. Dennis says that Gwen is "kind, hard-working, and follows through on her commitments. She is respectful and is respected by her peers."

Mrs. Meyr thinks that Gwen is "AMAZING! She is smart, easy-going, and very mature. She was like this even as a first grader in my classroom. One of my favorite things about Gwen is how kind she is to others. I often see her talking to people, helping them out, and being supportive. She is involved in so many things, and always has a smile on her face. She is a true leader, and I have no doubt she will do big things

in this world."

Ms. Will appreciates that Gwen is "such a positive student! She always asks questions and works hard to be the best she can be."

Mr. Gleixner acknowledges that Gwen is "a great student, athlete, and leader. She embodies what a Reed-Custer student should be: friendly, motivated, reliable, and high-quality character. Gwen is definitely the type of student and person that younger Comets should strive to be like."

Mrs. Arseneau thinks that Gwen is "the sweetest little gem ever! Although I have not had the pleasure to teach her, I have gotten to work with her over the years in Student Council. She now holds the role as our President and after just our first meeting, I am truly so excited for this year ahead of us! She is organized, poised, sweet and kind, able to execute tasks well on her own, manage her fellow student council members and run a meeting! Aside from how great she is as our Student Council president, Gwen is a wonderful human. She is sweet, kind, caring, smart, gentle, and talented. She is everything I would want in a daughter if I had one!"

Mrs. A Robinson says that Gwen is "a fantastic human being, inside and out! She was wonderful to have in class and a great addition to all the activities and clubs she has been a part of."

Mrs. Copeland believes that Gwen is "truly one of the kindest humans I know. She is the type of student who goes out of her way to offer an encouraging word to those who need it whether she knows them or not. She is the definition of kindness, grace, and humility. I can always count on her to bring life and joy to any classroom she walks in to! I am so proud of the person she is and the person she continues to always push herself to be!"

Ms. Chinski "cannot say enough great things

about Gwen. She works hard at everything she does, and she does it all! Gwen is kind, motivated, funny, and smart. It has been a privilege to watch her grow from my first 5th grade speech team to her senior year, and I can't wait to see all the amazing things she will do in the future!"

Mrs. Lee is thankful that Gwen is "truly one of a kind! Having had the joy of teaching her for many of her years in high school, it has been amazing to watch her grow from a freshman into a confident and compassionate senior. Gwen is one of the kindest people you'll ever meet; she goes out of her way to include others and makes everyone feel valued. Her dedication to learning goes beyond grades. She pushes herself to truly understand and grow. As our Student Council president, Gwen is constantly trying to think of ways to make RCHS an even better place and ensure that each person is seen. Gwen's enthusiastic hello each morning is one of the best parts of my day! Her confidence, maturity, and kind-hearted nature will carry her very far in life, and I can't wait to see where it takes her!"

Ms. Mountain says that Gwen is "the best. She is an awesome student and always strives to do well, but her personality and how she treats others is what stands out. She is so inclusive and kind to her peers which makes every room she goes into a more welcoming place for others. I love how she is willing to go out of her comfort zone and try something new. No matter what, she gives it her all, whether that be in the classroom, on the court, field, stage, or doing a speech. I am excited to see all that Gwen will accomplish and the lives she will impact!"

Mr. Wolf believes that Gwen is "a terrific kid with a big smile and a very bright future. She knows exactly who she is and that might

be her finest quality."

Mrs. Giffin acknowledges that Gwen's "intrinsic motivation and uncommon alacrity make her an asset to any classroom, team, or organization fortunate enough to have her. She continually leads by example, which motivates others to improve their own performance."

Mrs. Zwolinsky thinks that Gwen is "a prime example of a dedicated role model. She has been a huge asset to our girls' basketball program. Her positivity, perseverance, and drive are so contagious. I can't wait to see what she achieves her senior year and beyond!"

Mr. Randall appreciates that Gwen is "a fierce competitor and a natural leader on the field, as well as being one of the kindest, most respectful students in the classroom. She is always pushing herself to be at her absolute best at whatever she takes on."

Mrs. Rankin says that Gwen "comes to class every day with a positive attitude and a great work ethic. She's a great leader and a joy to have in class." Senora Bain thinks that Gwen "es la estudiante ideal: buena persona, amable, creativa, lista y claro trabajadora. Es sobresaliente y merece mucho este premio."

Mrs. Redwitz is thankful that Gwen is "a kind caring young adult. She has concern for others and will always help out. She is great leader and pushes others to be great as well! She is always smiling and always says hello whenever I see her."

As a final thought, Gwen's advice to younger students is, "High school is not about finding yourself; it's about creating yourself. So, follow your passion and be kind."

On behalf of the teachers and staff at RCHS, we would like to congratulate Gwen Stewart as the September winner of the Senior Spotlight.

Presbyterian women to hold Fall scrap-a-thon

The Braidwood Presbyterian Women will be holding a Fall Scrap-A-Thon on Saturday, Oct. 18, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church on 106 S. Lincoln St. in Braidwood.

For just \$50 you can

have a fun filled day of scrapping, door prizes, raffles and food. To reserve your spot please call or text Elizabeth Bell at 1-405-820-5944. Help spread the word to friends and family about this event.

Fall flower fundraiser

The First Presbyterian Church of Braidwood is holding a Fall Mum Flower Sale.

These huge 9-inch pots will be delivered to the church on Wednesday, Sept. 17, and will be ready to bloom beautifully for your fall decorating.

They are \$12 each and are available in orange, yellow, purple, pink, and bronze.

Call or text LuAnn Bolatto at 815-790-7134, Joyce Bauer at 815-584-7239, or Lora Grant 815-955-9927 by Sept 10th, to order.

Gas prices may dip with end of summer demand

Average gasoline prices in Illinois held steady for the week, averaging \$3.49/g Monday, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Prices in Illinois are 5.3 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 12.3 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

In Wilmington, expect to pay anywhere from \$3.24/g up to \$3.54/g. In Braidwood, prices are \$3.49/g across the board. In Coal City, gas late Sunday was at \$3.66/g at both Shell and Gas N Wash.

Further afield in Morris gas is \$3.39/g while Bourbonnais is lowest at \$3.19/g.

"With the unofficial end of summer now behind us, we saw the lowest national average

price of gasoline on Labor Day since 2020, with prices lower than a year ago in all but three states," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"This caps off the most affordable summer at the pump since 2021, with motorists spending \$11.3 billion less on gasoline compared to last year. While summer may be in the rearview mirror, low gas prices aren't going anywhere anytime soon. In fact, so long as we avoid major hurricanes or other disruptions, we're on solid footing to see the national average dip to \$2.99 per gallon this fall."

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Illinois was priced at \$2.73/g while the most expensive was \$4.67/g.

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Call first

BRAIDWOOD—If you get an ad in the mail for an oil change special for say \$50 be aware of what the actual cost is. Call them ahead of time and ask what the price out the door is when the oil change is finished. They still charge you labor and parts so it will end up being about a \$110 oil change. Just be aware.

Says it's free

SHADOW LAKES—A question on the ad on television that says you can buy Cialis or Viagra for \$7. It also says the prescription and shipping are free. So why than do they charge you \$7? Dan Hill

Kayak launch

ELWOOD—Boyfriend and I went to Wilmington on Sunday to kayak the Kankakee River. We were hoping to launch from the Wilmington park after hearing about a new launch gonna be built. Nothing there. Did the city give up on doing it? We ended up going to the Des Plaines Conservation boat launch which is way too busy for kayakers. Hoping Wilmington is still doing it.

History repeating itself

WILMINGTON—Think about this. Over 500 years ago illegal aliens from Europe landed in this country. The natives gave them sanctuary, they gave them food and homes. How did that work out for the indigenous people? History repeating itself again.

Let victims be heard

WILMINGTON—One thing liberals and conservatives agree on is child abuse, child trafficking and sexual assault on children. I don't want to hear from an actual convicted perpetrator Ghislaine Maxwell, she has already been accused of perjury, I want to hear from the victims. Is there a better way to decide guilt of these predators? Put victims under oath and have States Attorneys from different jurisdictions question the victims. They deserve to be heard, they were the victims. These Epstein allegations will not and should not be swept away. This is something both political parties should agree on. Any reluctance to hear from victims will be a another sign of distraction. Whether Clinton, Prince Andrew, rich Hollywood elites or Trump if they did something to 14-year-old girls or boys they should be exposed to the people of America. Why do rich folk always get away with blatant crimes? Poor people go to prison all the time they can't afford these shifty lawyers that skirt the system like the rich. Can we agree on this at least?

Red cities

BRAIDWOOD—What criteria does Trump use to send troops to cities throughout America? Let's look at the cities not getting a dose of troops. Jackson, Mississippi had the highest crime rate in the nation in 2024 but Trump isn't sending troops there. Other cities with high crime are St. Louis, Memphis, Birmingham and Kansas City but troops aren't going there either because they are red Republican to which Trump gives preferential treatment and won't embarrass them by sending troops. And how about Louisiana, the home state of Trump stooge and Republican Speaker of the House Mike Johnson? Louisiana has the highest homicide rate in the nation with Mississippi running a close second. But do you see troops in these red states? No you don't and never will because Trump is carrying out his retribution campaign which fascist leaders are in the habit of doing which begs the question, are we still a democracy? Perhaps for the billionaires. But by the midterms, democracy will be a distant memory the way Trump's dictatorship is creeping steadily stronger.

Creeping Dictatorship

WILMINGTON—Recently Trump announced, "I can do anything I want to

do". Not according to the Constitution. Trump ignores the Constitution and the American dream which our nation was so proud of until recently. The latest is Trump's desire to remove Lisa Cook from the Federal Reserve on minor ethics violations when Trump himself is a convicted felon on 34 counts. Cook is suing in court and she has a good chance of winning because the charges against her expose what a racist creep Trump is. Yes, Trump violates the Constitution by dictating anything and everything concerning education, museums, entertainment, universities, mascots of sports teams, federal occupation of our cities, interference with private corporations, making Congress dysfunctional, contributing to the corruption of the Supreme Court, of the Department of Justice and of the Federal Reserve. In other words, Trump is a dictator. Irene

Shot in church

WILMINGTON— I don't understand how anyone can believe in a God that let's children get shot in a church.

Politicizing crime

WILMINGTON—Our President claims that cities in blue states need National Guard and Army help to assist local law enforcement in tackling the increasing crime in these areas. However, studies have shown that most murders are happening in eight red states out of the 10 states studied, with Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama leading the pack. So why hasn't the President deployed the Guard to these states? Oh, by the way, red state Memphis is the most crime-ridden city in the United States. Chicago? Number 29. Sure looks like politicizing to me.

Deserve a break

MORRIS—I'm just watching all these Democrats in Chicago talking about President Trump may be sending the National Guard to Chicago. Pritzker, Duckworth, even the secretary of state and Durbin are all making fools out of themselves. They can't do anything to keep residents in Illinois or do anything to reduce property taxes for senior citizens. Let's get rid of all the illegal immigrants in the state of Illinois. Call and tell them to support Senate Bill 1862. Senior Citizens deserve tax breaks. They shouldn't have to pay any taxes on their property if they are over 80 and live in Illinois. Pritzker and all these Democrats are making us all look like idiots. All they want is crime, to raise more money and let all these illegals in.

Have in common

WILMINGTON—What do politicians and babies have in common? They both need to be changed often and for the same reason.

That's not peace

WILMINGTON—Trump wants a Nobel Peace Prize because Obama got one but he just authorized the sale of weapons to Ukraine which will prolong the Russian war of aggression, not peace.

Too expensive

WILMINGTON—Budgeting \$120B for creating 100,000 man security force under the guise of booting out illegal immigrants. But these masked thugs have minimum training, no identification visible and vast majority hide behind glasses and masks. Detaining anyone looking anything but white. No warrants needed, no rhyme or rhythm No due process. 100% against the Constitution. National Guard being stationed only in blue States now with loaded guns for intimidation. Normalizing Federal and uniformed State troops throughout America is a sign that he's determined to make this latest coup work. Is this the America you actually want? Gas isn't cheaper, my groceries are higher and my electricity bill has exploded. What happened to cheaper within weeks? Is this what you voted for? Russia is



bombing major Ukrainian cities more than ever after this meeting in Alaska. You want this? You agree with this? Midterm elections are being manipulated since he moved back to 1600. Flaunting the Constitution is the new norm, Congress has no backbone and Supreme Court has been comprised by billionaires and is nothing more than a rubber stamp for this dictator wannabe. We are definitely in scary times. No middle class, no Medicare, no Medicaid and Social Security being now called an "Entitlement". Is this what you thought you voted for? We are barely making it now what happens when bulk of his budget agenda takes effect in January 2027? This country is rapidly turning into a dictatorship is this what you thought you voted for? No more voting in this Democracy? You want this? You want your kids and grandkids living like peasants in Russia, China, North Korea? This the freedom you voted for? This what you expected? This guy is out of control, accepting a \$400M plane, creating a Bitcoin while being president, billionaires making policies? You OK with this? Republican Democrat Libertarian or Whig is this what you expected out of your vote? Unless We The People get together and curtail this nonsense America will not exist, tell me I'm exaggerating or wrong.

Class stars too

BRAIDWOOD—Wilmington, I think it is time to recognize the students that strive for good grades. It seems like all you recognize is sports. It is not impossible that your sports stars will go on to play in major league games but more of your honor roll student will be more likely to succeed in life. Try posting honors and high honors in the paper. Kids need to know that their efforts are being recognized.

Luxury of potato salad

BRAIDWOOD—The Labor Day holiday will be no cause for celebration according to the president of the AFL-CIO who said its members are full of anxiety about their job security and they are finding it difficult to make ends meet despite Trump's promise to lower prices on day one. Promise broken. Fortunately the labor unions offer health care benefits which will be yanked away from 17 million other Americans due to Trump's big, ugly bill which will cause hospitals to

close and increase medical costs across the board for everyone. Economists worry about an oncoming recession when the tariffs hit us months from now. Eat drink and be merry on this holiday because the worst is yet to come with nothing but hot dogs and chips. As for myself, I am happy to have lived during America's golden years when our nation was the envy of the world. Due to Trump we are now entering uncharted territory of authoritarian dictatorship difficult to defeat. And we are bearing the burden of Trump's shameful and embarrassing behavior such as the Alaska summit which is a stain on our beloved country.

Spray them dead

BRAIDWOOD—Has the mosquito abatement been out to spray at all this year? I don't recall seeing them, and the mosquitoes have been terrible this year.

Born rich

WILMINGTON—One thing has been proven without a doubt. If you are born rich no amount of stupidity, lies or fraud will limit your opportunities. In this country they will make you president.

Unhinged

RITCHIE—Rogue gun dealers, machine gun triggers. Unfortunately Biden's executive orders to ban these practices have been rescinded by Trump in bits and pieces since he took office. We know that on April 7 Trump removed Biden's 'zero tolerance' gun policy for rogue gun dealers and 10 days later a shooting occurred at Florida State University killing two and injuring five. We know that on May 16 Trump reversed Biden's ban on 'forced reset triggers' which allows guns to fire at the rate of machine guns. But although Trump can reverse Biden's executive orders, he cannot easily reverse Biden's legislation. Republicans helped pass Biden's Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022, when Biden effectively got the votes of Republicans for the good cause our nation is calling out for today. Our nation was so lucky to have Biden as our president but since Trump took office the gun safety laws we so desperately seek are being spitefully torn down due to the deranged Trump.

Commentary

Recently approved transmission projects will deliver benefits

BY CORA HOFFER

As electricity demand in the U.S. continues to grow, modernizing the transmission system is critical to ensure long-term grid reliability while expanding access to low-cost energy resources like wind, solar, and storage. In December 2024, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), a regional electric grid manager, approved Tranche 2.1—a \$21.8 billion investment in 24 new transmission projects across the upper Midwest, including northern Illinois. The projects are part of a plan MISO develops annually to identify maintenance and upgrades for its infrastructure. It is estimated that Tranche 2.1 would reduce curtailment in MISO's Midwest subregion by 11.2%, improving access to

more economic generation. Curtailment is any action that reduces the amount of electricity generated to maintain the balance between supply and demand, which is critical for avoiding blackouts. Furthermore, this portfolio provides MISO greater flexibility to tap the lowest-cost energy resources on the grid to meet consumer demand, alleviating instances where grid congestion bottlenecks may force residents to pay for more costly generation sources. Grid congestion occurs when the power grid becomes overloaded and can't efficiently transport electricity. This typically happens when electricity demand exceeds the grid's capacity, which can be caused by high consumption and aging infrastructure. New transmission also represents an investment

in rural communities, offering payments to landowners and generating tax revenue for counties to use for local schools and infrastructure. Improving the nation's transmission infrastructure is a cost-effective way to address the rising demand for electricity, as new lines help move existing energy generation to areas that need it most. These new projects create access to more efficient, lower-cost energy generating sources located further away from customers, deterring the need to develop less efficient energy resources and creating a strong electrical backbone across the region. Cora Hoffer is senior policy associate for the Center for Rural Affairs, a private, nonprofit organization working to strengthen small businesses, family farms and ranches, and rural communities.

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Respect for the guy who ran a 50k at 50

ELAINE FISHER-OHLUND
FOOD FOR THE SOUL

A post on Facebook by Jennifer Meents about her husband Kyle finishing a 50k at 50 years old is inspiring.

I've tried training for a marathon at 40 and it has kicked my butt. The farthest I've run before practically collapsing is 13.8 miles, only to crawl into the house to eat an entire sleeve of Oreos.

This man ran 31.07 miles through rugged terrain at 50! How?! I needed to talk to him to get his advice.

Kyle is a family man of three boys living in Wilmington. He is a computer software guy who has found a passion in personal training, working with many athletes and some adults. He specializes in jump training, weight lifting and speed training.

I contacted his wife to see if he would put me through a training session and if I could interview him for the paper. I had one request, that she do it with me.

Both were on board. I had so many questions about nutrition and training. I didn't even know where to start.

We hit the gym in their basement, their setup is impressive. It was clear he takes his personal training seriously.

He pointed to a machine for his wife and I, start here for 30 seconds. Within the first 5 minutes my heart was racing and I was sweating, struggling to get questions out.

So what was it like running a 50k?

"It was definitely one of the hardest things I have ever done and I will never do it again," Kyle said.

What's your nutrition like?

"I actually don't have a good diet at all."

However he did admit he doesn't miss a beat on his protein.

"Do you drink coffee? Alcohol? Energy drinks? I felt like a doctor wanting to understand their patient



KYLE MEENTS at the finish line of his 50K through Black Hills National Forest.

Photo by Jennifer Meents

and trying to crack the code on how he accomplished this.

He said he trained for two months although never training back-to-back days. He said if he ever did it again, that would be something he would change.

His son Brysen came barreling down the basement stairs to give his dad an update on football practice which gave me the opportunity to ask him a question.

"So Brysen, pretty cool your dad ran a 50k at 50, at any point did you think he wasn't going to be able to do it or did you have all the confidence for him?"

"Well after his detour I was a little worried."

"Detour?"

Kyle Meents chimed in, "yeah I haven't gotten to that part yet."

Apparently Kyle got lost in the first 14 miles of the race. He went 5 miles out of his way costing him an extra hour on his time.

His wife was relieved when he finally made it to the first aid station. His feet

were covered in mud and clearly he had a rough start.

"I approached that first aid station in such a negative mindset, I think I was just feeling defeated," he admitted.

So how did you man up and get out of that mental space?

"Well it was actually my wife's pep talk, seeing my family helped tremendously and then it hit me. I was going to finish this race if it meant I crawled across the finish line," he said.

He wasn't running this race for himself, but his family too. It wasn't just about the training and physical aspect, I realized it takes a particular mindset too.

As we pumped weights around his gym it was refreshing to watch the yin and yang energy between Kyle and his wife. High school sweethearts, it was clear that she was the calm to his go-go energy.

I think one major factor to his strength mentally and physically is the foundation of his wife's support.

In between planks I asked him about his side hustle Meents training which is more a passion than a profit. He enjoys working with young athletes the most and watching them grow. To be a catalyst to someone's goal is cool to watch.

So why did you do it? "Well I think everyone goes through a bit of a crisis when they hit these milestones and I wanted to prove to myself and my boys that I could do this."

Was it more mental vs. physical to finish the race?

"More physical for sure. After the frustration from getting lost and the cramping at that first aid station, I'd say I was in pretty good spirits. My crew (Jen, mom and dad), the other runners, the aid station volunteers, the overall positive atmosphere of the event, all helped mentally. But physically I was under-prepared, especially considering the terrain. That's on me. I'll know better next time."

I found it funny that it wasn't 48 minutes after saying he would never do it again that now I was hearing the words, "I'll know better next time."

I also found it interesting that in his mind he felt physically unprepared to do this race but it was the positive vibes that gave him the mental push to finish.

I walked away from this interview with so many new thoughts. One that stuck with me was maybe it's not about running from age, but embracing it.

Because with age comes strength, wisdom and if we are lucky enough, get to grow old with someone who supports all our dreams.

Thank you Kyle for letting me ask my weird questions and allowing me to come to the conclusion that when we stay out of the ego by humbling ourselves through acts of service or physical challenges, the human race can be pretty amazing.

Garden Club Annual Tea

The Wilmington Garden Club will have its annual Membership Tea on Wednesday, Sept. 17.

The club's meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m. at the Wilmington Park District 315 N. Water St. If you have an interest in gardening become a member and bring a friend.

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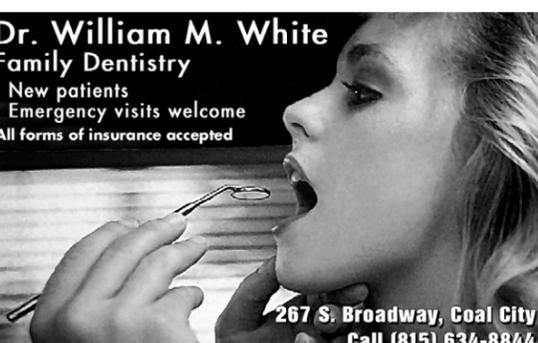
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Wilmington VFW Honor Guard Seeking Volunteers

The Wilmington VFW Post 5422 Honor Guard is looking for Honorably Discharged Veterans to join our team. The Wednesday Squad performs military honors at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery each week for our deceased brothers and sisters. We take pride in being the only squad made up entirely of veterans at ALNC.

Uniforms will be furnished. If you are interested or have questions about this noble cause please contact Squad Leader, Leonard Friddle at 815-342-4967. If no answer please leave a voicemail with your name and phone number. Messages will be returned as soon as possible.



These leaders know what's best for Chicago

The breadth of invited attendees at the event organized last week by Gov. JB Pritzker really stood out for me.



CAPITOL FACTS
Rich Miller

The event along the Chicago River was designed to publicly warn President Donald Trump not to send National Guard or regular military troops into the city. The usual collection of Democratic politicians, union leaders and several anti-violence and progressive activists were on hand and several spoke.

But what made this rally seem different was the presence of people who aren't usually at these things.

On the list of attendees were six university and college presidents or chancellors, including University of Illinois System President Tim Killeen and Illinois Institute of Technology President Raj Echambadi.

Several business types also showed up. Derek Douglas, President of the Civic Committee and the Commercial Club of Chicago, called the possible deployment "unprecedented and unwarranted" during his speech.

"Deploying federal troops or federalizing the National Guard without engaging state and local government, business, philanthropic and community leaders - the ones

who understand Chicago's needs and are on the ground working daily to make our city safer - is unprecedented and unwarranted," Douglas said.

The Commercial Club of Chicago is not a bunch of lefties. It was founded in 1877 by many of the city's wealthiest people. Fifteen years ago, the Civic Committee was best known for demanding that public employee pensions be reduced.

Billionaire philanthropist James Crown formed a public safety task force in 2022 within the Civic Committee. Crown's task force set a goal of reducing the number of murders from 805 the year before to below 400 by 2029. That looked impossible at the time, and when Crown died the following year, hopes sank.

But Crown's original goal appears to be easily within reach this year, four years ahead of schedule. The murder rate has been declining both in the city and around the country for the past couple of years, at least partly because of a big surge in federal funding of the sort of anti-violence programs advocated by Crown. That federal funding has now been cut off.

Douglas admitted during his speech last week that even with the progress, Chicago still "has a ways to go" on violent crime. He also said, "there

is a critical role for federal support that could benefit our city," but that what they need is "aligned action."

"What we don't need," Douglas said, "are disruptions to our economy and our businesses. Active duty military patrolling the streets of our city sends the wrong message and risks slowing our economy and disrupting the progress we've made together. It will impact businesses' bottom lines and ability to operate efficiently. It will impact tourism and employees getting to their jobs. It will impact morale."

Douglas concluded his speech by saying: "The kind of sweeping, uncoordinated, indiscriminate action being threatened sets a dangerous precedent, and we stand with our city and all Chicagoans to encourage the administration to productively engage with us, to help us continue to make progress on this critical issue."

Others in the business community attended and contributed written statements.

"We have seen how the sudden deployment of federal troops in other cities can needlessly disrupt communities and businesses, hurt local economies, and deter tourism," said Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce CEO Jack Lavin. "The best path forward is partnership and collaboration. If the federal government wants to work constructively with local leaders and community partners, we welcome that engagement to keep

making progress toward a safer, stronger city."

Like Douglas, Lavin said he would welcome "constructive engagement" from the federal government.

Civic Federation of Chicago President Joe Ferguson claimed sending in the troops is not "legally justified," adding, "investment and partnership is what is needed to move this City and State to a better future."

McPier CEO Larita Clark said none of her convention center's clients "have expressed the need for federal intervention in Chicago." She said her team had met recently with nearly two dozen of the convention center's largest clients. "What we heard from them was that public safety concerns in Chicago had actually lessened in the past year."

This is not meant in any way to lessen any of the other speakers and attendees, some of whom made strong arguments against a possible federal military deployment. It's just that I wasn't all that surprised that they showed up. And, yes, the biz types are all somehow politically connected in various ways.

But they're not the usual rally folks and, like the other speakers who got most of the news media's attention, their messages were worth a look. Also, I think Jim Crown might've been proud.

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

Illinois sheep producers learn of 'bright' options to make money

BY PHYLLIS COULTER
FARMWEEK

Sunshine might help increase sheep populations in Illinois, according to an Ohio sheep producer.

Camren Maierle, an American Lamb Board member, showed Illinois sheep producers photos of his sheep grazing on Ohio pastures in a field of solar panels. Solar grazing has become a big part of his business.

"There could be a decent amount of this in Illinois in the next couple of years," Maierle told Illinois lamb and wool producers at the Sheep Industry Day. There are about 55,000 sheep in Illinois, according to USDA.

Maierle predicts there will be more large-scale solar operations because of energy demand. "I want sheep on every one of those sites that are conducive to having sheep on them," he said.

"I'm not promoting solar panels, but if they go in, I want sheep there," he said virtually from Ohio at the University of Illinois event.

He sees it as a huge opportunity for sheep producers. "Our ability to capitalize on affordable feed is huge," he said of combining solar power and production agriculture, known as agrivoltaics.

Sheep are the animal of choice for solar grazing because they "fit" and cause less wear on the equipment than cattle or goats. "It's a risk mitigation industry," Maierle said.

Usually, a clover mix is used to graze three to five ewes per acre. Maierle said



Photo courtesy of the American Solar Grazing Association

NEW OPPORTUNITIES continue to pop up around the nation for solar grazing.

his goal, on well-managed pastures, is to graze eight to 10 sheep per acre.

He estimates that if a sheep producer grazes 500 solar acres, he or she could earn half a million dollars with 2,000 ewes if the lease was for \$350 per acre. That's not counting any lambs.

The competition for grazing solar fields isn't from neighboring sheep farmers, it is mowing companies, he said. Solar companies pay landscapers about \$480 per acre per year to keep the weeds down. Comparatively, sheep grazers might charge \$300 to \$500.

"I offer an improved service of soil health and management for equal pay," Maierle said. "Energy companies eat that up." Challenges for grazing

sheep on a solar farm compared to a traditional lot or pasture include movement of solar panels and managing wires sheep must traverse.

As for marketing increased Illinois lamb production, Maierle said homegrown lamb could displace some of the lamb imported today. Between 60% and 70% of lamb consumed in the state is imported from New Zealand and Australia.

To help farmers take advantage of the opportunities, the American Lamb Board and the American Sustainability Growers Association (ASGA), are teaming up to offer solar grazing certification programs. Maierle will be one of the trainers at the new ASGA solar grazing training program June 11-13 in

Kankakee. The three-day workshop costs \$200.

"The certification program can help a sheep producer become a valuable service provider," said Maierle, who noted there are things farmers will learn as a sheep producer at the event, even if they aren't solar grazing now.

Visit the website solargrazing.org to learn more about opportunities in agrivoltaics.

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.com.

Forest Preserve to host fall drum circle

The Forest Preserve of Will County is hosting a fall drum circle on Thursday, Sept. 11, from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

Welcome fall with a fun participatory drum circle led by James Evans of Three Rivers Drum Circle. Learn basic drumming techniques and how to create authentic rhythms. No experience necessary. Ages 18 or older; free. Register by Sept. 10.

Baptist church to host Alzheimer's caregiver support group

If you or someone you know is caring for a loved one with memory problems, you are invited to attend a caregivers support group that meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. at the First Baptist Church of Coal City, 4470 E. Route 113 in Coal City.

This meeting is for caregivers only. For additional information, please contact Becky Haldorson at 815-791-2658.

Alzheimer's caregiver support groups have many benefits for both caregivers and patients. Caregiving takes a heavy toll on the caregivers' mental and physical health and the health of the patient with dementia is directly related to the health of his or her caregiver: the healthier the caregiver, the healthier the patient, and vice versa.

Support group participants, value support groups as a place to learn

more factual information about dementia. Increased education about dementia makes caregivers more effective: they are better able to respond to patients' needs when they understand and can anticipate them.

Furthermore caregiver depression decreases as caregiver education about dementia increases, and when caregiver depression decreases, patient outcomes improve.

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Oak St., Downtown Manteno

VW and Toyota fined for cheating

Dear EarthTalk: I heard that VW and Toyota were fined for cheating on emissions tests for new vehicles. Why did they do this and are all of the car companies likely cheating?
- B.C., Boston, MA



VOLKSWAGEN AND TOYOTA aren't the only automakers trying to game the system to their advantage by falsifying data and other means.

tion can occur without resorting to fraud.

To tackle emissions fraud, authorities need to enhance enforcement and apply stricter penalties. Third-party organizations should handle emissions tests to ensure impartiality, and carmakers should be incentivized to develop sustainable technologies. As consumers, we can help by choosing vehicles that have confirmed eco-friendly certifications, and insisting on increased transparency from carmakers.

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

Emissions testing plays an essential role in controlling vehicle pollution and conserving the environment. These evaluations confirm that vehicles comply with legal regulations for the release of harmful gases such as carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxides. Nonetheless, certain car producers have been discovered to be cheating in these evaluations.

The main motive for is monetary. Achieving emissions standards frequently necessitates costly technologies such as sophisticated catalytic converters or more environmentally friendly engine designs.

For car manufacturers, these enhancements may reduce profits or increase vehicle prices for buyers, possibly leading to lower sales.

By engaging in deceit, companies can evade these expenses while still seeming to adhere to regulations. Moreover, tougher emissions regulations in areas such as the European Union and the U.S. exert notable pressure on manufacturers to innovate quickly. When deadlines appear unattainable, certain automakers resort to shortcuts by altering test outcomes.

Cheating also helps preserve a company's reputation. For example, VW heavily marketed its "Clean Diesel" vehicles as Eco-friendly alternatives, but later investigations revealed the use of defeat devices-*software* designed to manipulate results during tests.

These devices made cars appear cleaner while emitting up to 40 times the legal limit of pollutants in real-world driving. Toyota was recently fined for cheating, showing that even trusted industry leaders sometimes prioritize profits over compliance.

Other manufacturers have also faced accusations. Nissan falsified emissions data in Japan due to poorly managed testing systems. Opel was also found using defeat devices in Europe in 2015.

And BMW was involved in an "emissions cartel" that sought to limit progress in AdBlue, a technology designed to decrease nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions. Even Mercedes-Benz faced allegations of using defeat devices, though the company refutes the claims. John Stoll explains, "The emissions information says what the test needs it to say so that it passes regulatory tests. And then in real-world conditions, it emits far more of the harmful emissions such as NOx into the air than is legally allowed."

While it's unlikely that every car company cheats, the problem appears widespread enough to warrant concern. Weak enforcement and the potential for profit make cheating an attractive option for unethical companies. Nonetheless, many manufacturers do focus on compliance and put resources into cleaner technologies, demonstrating that innova-

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ELWOOD

COMMUNITY DAYS

LLOYD ERICKSON PARK

801 N. Chicago Avenue
Elwood, IL 60421

FRIDAY

SEPTEMBER 12TH

5 PM - 11 PM

SATURDAY

SEPTEMBER 13TH

7 AM - MIDNIGHT

ACCEPTING

CASH & CREDIT

Beer Tickets & Wristbands

Fees applicable

Food Vendors, Beer Tent & Margarita Truck

5:00 PM to 11:00 PM

Face Painting by Elwood Art Class

5:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Foam Ryders Foam Party & Rock Painting with Marie

5:30 PM to 7:30 PM

5K Run & Walk

6:00 PM

Junk Yard Dawgs Band

6:00 PM to 11:00 PM

Talent Show

7:00 PM - 7:30 PM

5K Run & Walk Awards

7:30 PM - 7:45 PM

BOB CORCORAN FISHING DERBY

7:00 AM

Sponsored by Jackson Township Sportsman's Club & Larry Walsh Jr. Ages 1-15 are welcome. Bring bait and fishing gear.

PARADE

11:00 AM

The parade will begin at the corner of South St. & Chicago Ave. Grand Marshal Ron Schmidt

FUN FOR THE FAMILY STARTS AT 12:00 PM

Crosstown Exotics Show - 12:00 PM
Open Play - Basketball, Gaga Ball, Volleyball & Badminton - 12:00 PM
Memory Lane Stables - Pony Rides & Petting Zoo 1:30 PM
Old School Family Games - 2:00 PM
Windy City Game Theater, Laser Tag, Knockerball Soccer & Bounce with Us - 4:00 PM
Face Painting by Elwood School - 5:00 PM
Goofy Faces (Caricaturist) - 6:00 PM

VENDORS & EXHIBITS

12:00 PM

Craft Show, Twilighters Bingo Jackson Township History Club, Elwood Fire Protection - Touch-a-Truck

UKULELE STRUMMERS

12:30 PM

At the Children's Garden

FOOD VENDORS, BEER TENT & MARGARITA TRUCK

12:00 PM TO MIDNIGHT

Raceway Pizza, Annabell's Bar-B-Q La Pasadita Mexican Restaurant & The Creamery. Beer Tent - \$5.00 ea. & The Dock Margarita Truck \$12.00 ea. 25 Flavors

BABY CONTEST

3:00 PM

Under the Large Pavilion

BEAN BAG TOURNAMENT

5:00 PM REGISTRATION

Registration begins at 5:00 p.m. Tournament starts at 6:00 p.m. Contact Bob Bowers 815-721-9872

MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

5:00 PM TO MIDNIGHT

Hoodwinkd - 5:00 p.m. Cadillac Groove - 8:00 p.m.

MAD BOMBER FIREWORKS

9:30 PM

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OBITUARIES

Martha Bassett

WASHINGTON—Martha Bassett, 32, formerly of Wapato, WA and later of Chicago, passed away suddenly on Sept. 28, 1968, in Wilmington. Her identity remained unknown for more than 50 years until advances in forensic science and the perseverance of investigators finally restored her name, bringing long-awaited closure to her family.



Martha was born on Jan. 3, 1936, in Wapato, WA, the daughter of John and Ida (Henry) Bassett. She was raised on the Yakama Reservation and was a proud member of the Yakama Nation, with lineage to both the Wanapum and Rock Creek tribes. She graduated from Wapato High School and later attended Yakama Business College, where she studied English, shorthand, typing, office practice, and penmanship.

In 1957, she relocated to Chicago through the Bureau of Indian Affairs Relocation Program, a federal initiative established under the Indian Relocation Act of 1956. There she began her career as a teletype operator for the Western Union Telegraph Company, a position she held faithfully for more than a decade until her passing.

She enjoyed photography, was a skilled seamstress, and was an avid reader. These pursuits reflected her thoughtful nature and her love of learning.

Although Martha's life ended tragically, her story did not fade. In 2009, the Will County Coroner's Office established a cold case unit and exhumed her remains in order to take advantage of advances in

forensic science. Analyses conducted at the University of North Texas, the Smithsonian Institution, and the University of Illinois Forensic Anthropology Department suggested her ancestry was Native American. This important detail allowed investigators to reach out to tribal communities across the Midwest, keeping her case active for years.

In 2024, with assistance from Othram Inc., a forensic genetic genealogy company, new DNA sequencing techniques identified her as Martha Bassett. Through the cooperation of family members, Native communities, and investigative teams, her identity was finally confirmed after decades of uncertainty.

The family will proceed from Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Road, to Midway International Airport in Chicago, accompanied by family and representatives from the Will County Coroner's Office, as we bid her a final farewell and return her to Washington State. After her return to Washington traditional services will be held at the Toppenish Creek Longhouse. She will be laid to rest at Union Gap Cemetery in Yakama County, WA.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto her memorial page at www.BaskervilleFuneral.com to sign the guest book and share Martha's memorial page online through social media.

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

Marianne C. Brooks

WILMINGTON—Marianne C. Brooks, 76, of Wilmington, passed away Aug. 27, 2025 at Lightways Hospice and Serious Illness Care in Joliet.



Born March 22, 1949 in Joliet, Marianne was a daughter of Fred and Ruth (Peterson) Martens. She was raised in Wilmington, graduated with the Wilmington High School class of 1967, and continued her education at Northern Illinois University, where she earned her Bachelor's Degree. Marianne later went on to earn her Master's Degree in Education.

On Dec. 19, 1981, Marianne married Gary Lee Brooks, and together they made their home in Wilmington, where they raised their family. She devoted 37 years to teaching in the Wilmington School District 209U, where she touched countless lives and inspired generations of students.

Marianne was a proud member of the "Jewels of the Schools," a Red Hat Society chapter of retired teachers who shared friendship, laughter, and camaraderie. She was also a member of the Wilmington Historical Society.

Marianne had many passions that filled her life with joy and color. She had a lifelong love of genealogy, carefully tracing her family roots and especially cherishing her Norwegian and German heritage. She especially treasured her travels to Norway, which allowed her to connect more deeply with her ancestry. At home, she found fulfillment in her gardens of flowers and vegetables, and her creative spirit shone through in arts and crafts, particularly wreaths and baskets that she made with care. An avid photographer with her beloved Canon camera, Marianne enjoyed capturing the beauty around her, while her whimsical side delighted in her cheerful collection of gnomes.

A devoted reader, she made it a point to read every single Danielle Steele novel, and her sense of fun and humor carried into the classroom, where she loved playing Mad Libs with her students. That sense of humor became a lasting gift she passed along to her children. She also had a passion for sports, always proudly cheering on the Wilmington Wildcats and faithfully

showing off her purple Wildcat pride. She loved wearing purple and wore it as often as she could.

Marianne's heart for others defined her life. She was always caring for others, putting their needs first and gladly stepping in to help anyone in need. Family and friends knew her as a giver, someone who cared deeply, laughed often, and loved unconditionally. She always had a soft spot in her heart for dogs and showed her love of country and support of the military by proudly displaying red, white, and blue. One of her proudest roles was being an "Army Grandma" to her grandson, Keenan, whose service filled her with immense pride.

Survivors include her two children: Jennifer (Chad) Speer, of Wilmington and Garret (Sarah) Brooks, of Joliet; loving Nana to three grandchildren: Pvt. Keenan Orr, of Fort Campbell, KY and Sterling and Jackson Brooks, of Joliet; her sister, Nancy (the late Jimmie) Williams and niece, Julie Williams, both of Marco Island, FL and many loving cousins.

Marianne was preceded in death by her parents, husband, Gary and nephew, David Williams.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd. in Wilmington on Thursday, Sept. 4, 2025 from 1 p.m. until service time at 4:30 p.m. Following services Marianne will be laid to rest in Saratoga Cemetery in Morris beside her beloved husband, Gary.

Serving as pallbearers are Garret Brooks, Jennifer Speer, Chad Speer, Keenan Orr, Stephanie (Sloman) Pratt, and Charlie Brainard.

In lieu of flowers, preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Marianne's memory to 209U Foundation For Excellence, 209U Wildcat Court, Wilmington, IL 60481.

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

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

Debra Duras

COAL CTY—Debra Duras, 70, of Coal City, formerly of Chicago and Lemont, IL, passed away on Aug. 29, 2025 at Serenity Estates in Morris.



Born Nov. 10, 1954, in Chicago, Debra Lynn was the daughter of Joe and Flo Turkowski. She spent her early childhood in Chicago before her family moved to Lemont, where she attended and graduated with the Lemont High School class of 1973. On June 15, 2012, Debra married James Russell at the courthouse after waiting over an hour for the judge. Together they made their home in Coal City, where they raised their family and shared their lives.

Debra began her working career at Fox Valley Mall, where she served as a clothing department manager for several years. She then joined Exelon as a project manager, a position she held with dedication for more than 37 years before retiring. Throughout her career, she was admired for her strong work ethic and leadership.

She was a devout member of the Catholic Church in Lemont and a faithful contributor to St. Jude Children's Hospital. Debra enjoyed cooking a wide variety of foods and took pride in preparing meals for others. She loved to travel, with her final trip being to Tahiti. A lifelong animal lover, she cared for pets of all kinds and sizes. Music was another joy in her life, and she especially enjoyed listening at full volume. She was generous by nature and also

loved to shop, often coming home with new clothes even when closet space had long run out. She was an avid reader and would often be found with her nose in a novel at the Coal City library.

She is survived by her husband, Ron; one son, Skylar (Casey) Miller, of Chicago; one sister, Sue (Ken) Scott, of Lemont; three brothers-in-law: Keith Russell and Steve (Christy) Russell, both of Morris and Terry (Stori) Russell, of Seneca; numerous cousins, several nieces and nephews, and her furry friends at home.

Debra is preceded by her parents, two siblings: Joey Turkowski, Mary (Glen) Pasiewicz, and numerous special friends whom she thought fondly of.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Debra's name to St. Jude's Children's Hospital.

Funeral services were held Wednesday, Sept. 3, 2025 at Reeves Funeral Home in Coal City. Burial was at Braceville-Gardner Cemetery where she was laid to rest.

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

Funeral and Burial services were made under the direction and care of Reeves, Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory.

Michael J. Marietta Jr.

WILMINGTON—Michael J. Marietta Jr., 62, of Wilmington, passed away unexpectedly on Saturday, Aug. 30, 2025, at St. Joseph Medical Center in Joliet.



Born Oct. 15, 1962, in Joliet, Michael John is the son of Michael John Sr. and Barbara (Palermo) Marietta, of Wilmington. He was raised and educated in Wilmington and graduated from Wilmington High School.

Mike was most recently employed with JM Printing in Crest Hill, and previously worked for many years at Midtown Mart in Wilmington. He was a lifelong member of St. Rose Catholic Church and also belonged to Wilmington Moose Lodge #241 and the A.F. & A.M. Wilmington Lodge #208.

Mike will be remembered for his passion for NASCAR and his love of collecting cars. He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, and all who had the pleasure of knowing him.

Survivors include his parents, Mike Sr. and Barbara Marietta; siblings: Lori (John) Duncan, Theresa Marietta (Janet Meyer) and De Anna (James) Farrell; nieces and nephews: Anthony (Monica) Hughes, Angela (Chris) Burnette, Andrew (Jane) Hughes, Stephen Lapinsky, Ian Marietta-Meyer and Jack Marietta-Meyer; two great-

nieces, Emily and Lyric, and his aunts and uncle, JoAnn Palermo and Joseph (Joyce) Palermo, as well as his dear friend, Cindy.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd. in Wilmington on Wednesday, Sept. 3, 2025 from 2 p.m. until time of Masonic Services at 4 p.m., which will be conducted by the A.F. & A.M. Lodge #208.

Funeral services will immediately follow with Deacon Jay Plese from St. Rose Catholic Church presiding. Cremation rites will be accorded at the conclusion of the services, and Mike will privately be laid to rest in Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wilmington at a later date.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Mike's memory to Kuzma Care Cottage, 635 S. Main St., Wilmington, Illinois 60481.

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

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

Don Plott

MAZON—Don Plot, 85, a lifelong resident of Mazon, passed away Thursday, Aug. 28, 2025 at Lightways Hospice in Joliet.



Born Oct. 19, 1939, Don was a son of Dennis and Lena (Sease) Plott. He was raised and educated in Mazon where he graduated from high school with the class of 1957. On Sept. 6, 1959, Don married Elizabeth Ann Gaston in Violet Hill, AR and together they made their home and raised their family in Mazon.

Don worked many jobs throughout his life, starting out with a dear friend driving for Texaco Gas to managing the Standard Oil Gas Station and service center with Liz next door running the Feed Bag to Northern Petrochemical Company. He always had many stories to tell with some of the best ones being of the times and people he came to know when he was owner of the Lazy8 Western Stores where he channeled his fondness for all things country western into a business venture, owning and operating stores from Joliet, Kankakee, Bloomington to as far away as Savanna along the Mississippi River. These businesses remained his passion for nearly 15 years before his well-earned retirement in Mazon.

He was very proud to be from Mazon and participated in many activities and events to support his local community. Don was a volunteer fireman and served for a period as Chief of the Mazon Fire Department, he was a member of the Village Board, and served as Mayor. In addition, he also volunteered his time to youth organizations such as the Boy Scouts and as a baseball coach.

Don was a member of the Coal City Area Club as well as a past member of the Loyal Order of Moose and the Lions Club. One of his hobbies he enjoyed was building homes, including the one that he and Liz shared together the past 50 years. In his spare time, he enjoyed being outdoors hunting and fishing, and teaching Western dancing with the Boot Kickers. He was a life long Chicago White Sox fan trading jabs with any and all Cub fans. Above all else, Don was happiest when he was with his family. He loved his wife and children, his nieces and nephews were like his children, and friends were family. Don worked hard to make the most of any situation and share the importance of community and

family.

Survivors include his wife, Liz Plott, of Mazon and two children, Dave (Christine) Plott, of Plainfield and Debbie Plott, of Joliet and his nieces and nephews: Bobbie (Randy) Davidson, Philip (Jennifer) Carr, John (Tricia) Carr, Randy (the late Melody) Gaston, Elizabeth (Mark) Bullock, Emily (the late Russell) Gaston, HB (the late Carolynn) Easter, Sheila (Joey) Bray, Sandra Story, Bill (Tracy) Gaston, Barb (Steve) Saia, Terri Winfree, Vince (Angel) Gaston, Melinda Gaston, Matthew (the late Linda) Cheadle, Bob (Kathy) Plott Jr., Kathy (Jim) Sayers and Denise (Marvin) Schrum. Other survivors include special friends: Gordon Gantzert, Pat Vint and Barry Bivens, and all his daily Mazon coffee buddies.

Don was preceded in death by his parents, Dennis and Lena Plott; two brothers, Robert Sr. and Ivan Plott, and one sister, Faye Gilmour; mother and father-in-law, Lone and Marybet Gaston; brothers and sisters-in-law: Paul (Faye) Gilmour, Norene (Bob) Plott, Johnnie Sue (Jack) Dunavin, Rex (Almeda) Gaston, Carol Gaston, Bertie Lee (Bob) Carr, Cleff (Jake) Winfree, Lytle Gaston, and Jackie Gaston and nieces and nephews: Tim Carr, Jimmy Dunavin, Linda Cheadle, Russell Gaston, Carolyn Easter, Royce Gaston, Rick Gaston, William Carr, Aleta Gilmour, Lisa Suprenant, and Steven Plott.

The family will receive friends at Reeves Funeral Home, 75 N. Broadway Street, in Coal City on Saturday, Sept. 6, 2025, from 10 a.m. until the time of funeral service at 12 p.m. Burial will follow at Mazon Brookside Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made as gifts in Don's memory to the Mazon Fire and Ambulance Department, Mazon Brookside Cemetery, and the MVK Food Pantry.

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

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

Rosemary A. Skole

CUSTER PARK—Rosemary "Rosie" A. Skole (née Kuban), 75, of Custer Park, passed away peacefully at home on Sunday, Aug. 17, 2025. She was born Sept. 14, 1949, in Joliet, the beloved daughter of Joseph and Anna Jane (née Wilhelmi) Kuban. On June 17, 1978, Rosemary married the love of her life, Gregory Skole, in Joliet.



Rosemary was a proud graduate of St. Bernard Grade School and Providence High School, class of 1967, and was raised in the Catholic faith. She began her career with the Joliet Police Department, making history as one of the department's first female cadets and later continuing her service in the police department's records division. She later worked for the Reed-Custer School District in food service at Custer Park Primary School, where she was a kind and familiar face to countless students.

Rosemary cherished time with her family, especially her beloved granddaughters. She had a passion for cooking and found joy in trips to the casino, where she loved playing the slot machines. Some of her happiest moments were spent traveling to Fort Myers Beach, FL, tending to her garden, and nurturing her beautiful flowers.

Rosemary is survived by her loving husband, Gregory, and their daughter, Suzanne (Robert) Kersmarki, of Custer Park. She was the proud grandmother of Kaitlyn and Riley Kersmarki. She is also

survived by her sister, Joann Buck, of Joliet; her brothers, Joseph (Judith) Kuban, of Joliet and Stephen (Karen) Kuban, of Essex; brothers-in-law, David (Rita) Skole, of Elwood and Jack (Kelly) Skole, of Custer Park; and sisters-in-law, Jill Skole (Judith Sutter), of Custer Park and Ann (James) Wetstein, of Joliet. Rosemary will also be fondly remembered by her many nieces and nephews.

She was lovingly preceded in death by her parents, Joseph and Anna Kuban; her brothers, Robert and Michael Kuban; her brother-in-law, George Buck, and sister-in-law, Patricia Kuban.

Cremation rites have been accorded. A memorial visitation will be held at R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory on Saturday, Sept. 13, 2025, from 9 to 10:30 a.m. Procession will leave at 10:30 a.m. to Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, in Coal City, with a memorial mass at 11 a.m. Rev. Joshua Miller will officiate. Inurnment will be private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Uplifted Care or Pink Heels, Joliet Area Chapter. To share memories or offer condolences, please visit Rosemary's online guestbook at www.rwpattersonfuneralhomes.com or find them on Facebook.

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

Illinois tops in cell phone overspending

Illinois has the highest cell phone overspending rate in the U.S., according to research completed by WhistleOut.com.

A comprehensive look at how much Americans

are spending on access to mobile phones shows an average of \$2,928/year for mobile plan services for U.S. families.

The number of U.S. households overspending on

mobile plans is 89,237,950. Illinois ranks at the top among states with the highest annual household overspending on cell phone plans at \$2,542/year.

Illinois ranks at the top among states with the highest annual household overspending on cell phone plans at \$2,542/year.

Grundy Bank welcomes Laken as new vice president of commercial lending

Grundy Bank is pleased to announce the addition of Steve Laken as its new vice president of commercial lending.



STEVE LAKEN

Laken will be responsible for expanding the bank's commercial lending services, fostering strong partnerships with local businesses and supporting Grundy Bank's commitment to community economic growth and personalized financial solutions.

With over 30 years of experience in community banking, Laken brings a proven track record of building lasting client relationships and managing complex financial portfolios.

He holds an MBA in finance from Lewis University and has successfully partnered with community banks across the region throughout his career. Laken specializes in developing new loan and deposit relationships, conducting in-depth commercial credit analysis and overseeing both loan and deposit portfolios.

His strategic approach to portfolio management and dedication to personalized service make him a valuable addition to Grundy Bank's commercial lending team.

"I am excited to have Steve join the Commercial Banking Team," said Pete Brummel, senior vice president of commercial lending at Grundy Bank. "He brings 30+ years of community-focused banking experience, and this is a perfect fit with our lending culture at Grundy Bank."

In addition to his professional work, Laken has been a dedicated member of the Joliet Kiwanis Club for the past 20 years. He has also served on the boards of the Grundy County Chamber of Commerce and the Will-Grundy Center for Independent Living.

Outside of his professional and volunteer commitments, Steve enjoys coaching both of his children's softball and baseball teams in the Channahon area-further demonstrating his commitment to community and family.

"I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to work for such an outstanding organization as Grundy Bank," said Laken. "I'm really looking forward to this move at this stage of my career."

For locations and information on Grundy Bank call 815-942-0130 or visit grundy.bank. Member FDIC. Equal Housing Lender.

Recycle your bicycle during Sept.13-28 drop-off

The Forest Preserve is hosting Recycle Your Bicycle on Saturday, Sept. 13 through Sunday, Sept. 28 at multiple preserves. Clean out the garage and recycle your bicycle with the Forest Preserve District and Working Bikes, which refurbishes and

distributes bikes worldwide.

Drop-offs accepted at Hidden Oaks Preserve in Bolingbrook, McKinley Woods - Kerry Sheridan Grove in Channahon, Monee Reservoir in Monee Township and Sugar Creek Preserve in Joliet.

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Signup now for Sept. 13 Megan's Mission 5k Run/Walk

The annual "Megan's Mission 5k Run/Walk" is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 13 at 6 p.m.

This family-friendly event is part of the Village of Coal City's Fall Festival. Competitive and recreational runners, walkers, strollers, and dog walkers are welcome as the goal is to bring as many people together as possible in support of the childhood cancer community.

Parents should encourage the participation of youth to teach "kids supporting other kids".

The start and finish line will be in front of Babe's Tap in Coal City. The first 400 registered are guaranteed to receive a custom race shirt and a finisher medal.

Last year's event resulted in 426 runners

and walkers coming out to show their support during Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. The registration fee is \$35 in advance and \$40 on race day.

Teams of 10 or more who register under the same team name will receive a \$10 discount per team member.

All proceeds from this event will help the Megan's Mission Foundation continue to support some of the most innovative and promising childhood cancer research in the country taking place in the "Megan Bugg Global Rhabdomyosarcoma Research Laboratory" at the Children's Cancer Therapy Development Institute in Oregon.

To date, the Megan's Mission Foundation has

donated \$2.5 million to support childhood cancer research in the pursuit of Megan Bugg's dream to end the nightmare of childhood cancer through advocacy and research.

Registration for this run/walk is available at <https://runsignup.com/Race/Events/IL/CoalCity/MegansMission>.

Register today to guarantee your custom race shirt and finisher medal, and be a part of a powerful showing of support for all the brave childhood cancer warriors and their families.

Race sponsorship opportunities are available at https://cfgrundycounty.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/list/event?event_date_id=1231.

Learn to eat what's healthy for your heart

Morris Hospital and the Morris Hospital YMCA are offering a free heart-healthy diet program on Tuesday, Sept. 9, from 1:30-2:30 p.m. at the Morris Hospital YMCA, 2200 W. Dupont Ave., Morris. The program is open to the community and does not require YMCA membership to attend.

During the program, a registered dietitian from Morris Hospital will explain

how to reduce saturated fats, cholesterol, and sodium in the diet while increasing fiber. Eating a heart-healthy diet helps reduce the risk of heart disease by lowering cholesterol and blood pressure.

To register for the nutrition program, call Morris Hospital's Wellness Manager at 815-705-7358 or go to www.morrishospital.org/events and select the Nutrition category.

The Stroke Support Group meets quarterly with a goal of providing support and education while bringing together people who are facing similar issues.

Those planning to attend are asked to register online at www.morrishospital.org/events, or call Morris Hospital's Speech Language Pathology Department at 815-705-7440.

Stroke support group to meet at Morris YMCA

Morris Hospital is hosting its Stroke Support Group on Tuesday, Sept. 9, from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the Morris Hospital YMCA, 2200 W. Dupont Avenue, Morris.

Individuals who have a history of stroke or any neurological event are invited to attend along with caregivers, spouses, and loved ones.



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6:00 PM
Worship and Service
at 6:30 PM

Saturday September 20th
GUEST SPEAKER
PASTOR VAUGHN SANDERS
Ice Cream Social
6:00 PM
Worship and Service
at 6:30 PM

1ST BAPTIST CHURCH BIRTHDAY BASH

Sunday September 21st

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<https://www.facebook.com/firstbaptistchurchcoalcity/>

1st Baptist Church Coal City: 4470 IL-State Route 113

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Seeking Qualified Applicants for Firefighter/EMT-B and Firefighter/Paramedic

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

FF/EMT-B Starting Salary: \$60,875.79
FF/Paramedic Starting Salary: \$70,875.79

QUALIFICATIONS

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

Applications will be available to qualified candidates August 27th, 2025 - September 26th, 2025 between the hours of 8:00am-3:00pm, Monday-Friday at Station #1, 201 N. Kankakee Street, Wilmington, IL. *You may also download the application online at www.wilmingtonfire.org under the Employment tab.*

Completed application must be returned to the above address **IN PERSON OR EMAIL** (wilmingtonfire@wilmingtonfire.org) no later than 3:00 pm on Friday, September 26th, 2025. Failure to complete the application in its entirety shall be grounds for rejection from the process.

Applicants must attend the following:

- Orientation/Written Exam: Monday, September 29th, 2025 at 6 pm Sharp (No one will be allowed in the room after 6 pm)
- Oral Interviews: Friday, October 3rd, 2025 and Monday, October 6th, 2025. (If needed)
- Physical Ability: Must have a CPAT card with ladder climb issued no more than 365 days prior to conditional offer.

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

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63. Chinese dynasty
64. Resembling a wing
65. Small projection on a bird's wing
66. Of the Isle of Man
67. Derived unit of force (abbr.)
68. Plate for Eucharist

- CLUES DOWN**
- Vipers
 - Ancient city in Syria
 - Slog
 - Emits coherent radiation
 - "Pollock" actor Harris
 - Bleated
 - Monetary units of Afghanistan
 - Tooth doctor
 - One who takes apart
 - Commoner
 - Beat poet Ginsberg
 - Cave deposit material
 - Home energy backup
 - Begets
 - Face part
 - Frocks
 - Hill or rocky peak
 - Giving the impression of dishonesty
 - About ear
 - Male parents
 - Popular grilled food
 - Vaccine developer
 - Not conforming
 - Polite address for women
 - 1970 U.S. environmental law
 - Astronomical period of 18 years
 - One who fights the government
 - Center for Excellence in Education
 - Watches discreetly
 - An electrically charged atom
 - Hymn
 - Arabic given name
 - Popular pie nut
 - City in Zambia
 - Species of cherry
 - John ____, British writer
 - Be next to
 - Make angry
 - Give birth to a lamb or kid
 - Unhappy

- CLUES ACROSS**
- Fairly large
 - Barrels per day (abbr.)
 - Cover the entirety of
 - Leafy appetizer
 - Showy ornament
 - Norse personification of old age
 - Athletes
 - Closes tightly
 - Attack via hurling items
 - Where the reserves stand
 - Sword
 - Begat
 - Damage another's reputation
 - Northeast
 - Turf
 - For each
 - Hours (Spanish)
 - Western state
 - One who offers help
 - Flanks
 - A woolen cap of Scottish origin
 - Free from drink or drugs
 - Tunnels
 - Mature
 - More dried-up
 - News organization
 - Steal something
 - Forms one's public persona (abbr.)
 - Female fish eggs
 - Small petrel of southern seas
 - Edible starches
 - Historical
 - In a place to sleep
 - Horse grooms
 - Off-Broadway theater award

ESTATE AUCTION FOR JIM HARVEY
Sat., Sept 6, 10:00 a.m. • 417 Merrill street, Braceville, IL
Rain date Sun., Sept. 7th

Check auction zip.com I.D. 9525 for listing and photos

Several beer lights, clocks and signs-VTG wall and Mantle clocks-VTG coke clock-new clocks-METAL STREET STOP SIGNS-PEPSI & COKE WOODEN POP CASES-POP AND BEER BOTTLES-COPPER CLAD PORCELAIN WOOD BURNING STOVE-VTG.FIRE HYDRANTS- VTG Eagle 25 cent gumball machine-VTG. WAGNOR CAST IRON PCS-VTG GRISWOLD CAST IRON PCS. (DISPLAY RACK-CORN CAKE MOLDS-DAMPERS-SKILLETS, ASSORTED SIZES)-CAST IRON MECHANICAL BANKS-COLLECTION OF BANKS-FRICTION TOYS-coke trays-NASCAR DIECAST CARS-CASEYS ANN. TRAIN SET, NIB-CUSTOM DIECAST TRUCK REPLICAS, NIB-MATCH BOX DIE CAST-LG. CARVED WOODEN ROOSTER & OWL-STONWARE MIXING BOWLS-OLD CROCKS-#2 FRUIT PRESS- primitives-ZIPPO LIGHTER COLLECTION PLUS-POCKET KNIVES-SEVERAL GOOSE DECOYS-FISHING EQUIPMENT -BASEBALL CARDS-8 hp SnowDevil snowblower,like new-25 GAL.AIR COMPRESSOR-porter cable 10 watt generator-Honda GC 160 engine-DEWALT construction air compressor, 5.5 hp motor-numerous power tools-Craftsman hand tools & power tools-lumber-Scaffolding set-

This is the first of two auctions, second one Sept. 20. Jim was a Hugh collector of clocks, primitives, die cast vehicles and so much more. These are both great auctions.

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COMET SPORTS

Wilmington edges Reed-Custer in close golf match

The Wilmington Wildcats boys golf team pulled out a narrow victory over Reed-Custer on Tuesday, August 27, at Silver Oaks Golf Course. Wilmington posted a team score of 195, just four strokes ahead of Reed-Custer's 199.

The Wildcats were led by Hank Lindsey, who carded the day's lowest score with a 43 to earn medalist honors. He was followed by Caius Drown (49), Ryker Feil (51), Joey Lewsader (52), Parker Hazzard (54) and Zander Van Duyn (71).

Reed-Custer was paced by Tanner Gullquist and Mason Vasil, who each shot 47. Caedon Baumgartner followed with a 51, while Logan Bean, John Buchanan, and Nathan Trucano each finished with 54s.

Wilmington, who does not have a home golf course due to the club-

house fire and resulting land sale of High Point Golf Course in Essex, travels Sept. 9 to Peotone. Reed-Custer's will play

at Kankakee Elks Golf Course today (Wednesday) and at Manteno Sept. 9 before hosting Coal City Sept. 10.



Photo by Eric Fisher

REED-CUSTER GOLFER Nathan Trucano watches his ball as it sails to the #9 green at Silver Oaks Golf Course.



Photo by Eric Fisher

TEEING UP the ball while driving Hole 2 at Silver Oaks Golf Course is Comet golfer Nick Mallaney.



Photo by Eric Fisher

HITTING OUT OF the sand on Hole #4 at Silver Oaks Golf Course is Reed-Custer freshman Johnny Buchanan.



Photo by Eric Fisher

DRIVING THE BALL from the second tee at Silver Oaks Golf Course is Kaitlyn Lantka.

Lady Comets need a lift

The Reed-Custer varsity volleyball team lost to Dwight on Wednesday in two sets, 18-25 and 16-25.

Mackenzie Foote brought in 1 ace, 1 kill, and 2 assist blocks. Makenzi Thompson helped the team with 3 kills, 5 digs, and 1 assist block. Kamryn Wilkey led the team on defense with 7 digs and several good receptions on serve-receive.

The Lady Comets fell to Gardner-

South Wilmington last Tuesday in two sets (9-25 & 11-25).

Alyssa Wollenzien had 1 ace, 1 kill, and 1 solo block. Makenzi Thompson put down 3 kills and recorded 7 digs on defense. Reese Brown assisted the team with 4 set assists, and Maddy Marschner had 1 set assist and 3 kills.

They will host a tough Manteno squad on Thursday.

Reed-Custer A team battles through a tough week

The Reed-Custer A Team girls softball squad faced a challenging stretch of games this past week, going up against Limestone and Seneca.

Despite strong individual performances, the Lady Comets were unable to come away with a victory, but the team showed grit and improvement.

Game 1: Reed-Custer vs. Limestone (Aug. 26 - Braidwood)

In an offensive battle from the start, Reed-Custer and Limestone matched each other run-for-run before finishing in an 11-11 tie. The Lady Comets tallied 8 hits but were undone by 6 errors in the field.

Offensive Leaders:
Macey Steichen: 2 hits (1 triple), 1 run, 1 RBI
Aubrey Henderson: 1

hit, 2 runs, 1 RBI, 3 walks
Madison Boravicka: 1 hit, 1 run, 2 walks
Kaelyn Fritas: 1 hit, 2 runs, 1 RBI, 1 walk
Audrey Vanek: 1 hit, 2 runs, 1 RBI, 1 walk
Lily Johnson: Reached base 4 times
Steichen pitched all 6 innings, allowing 11 runs (7 earned) on 11 hits. She struck out 7 and walked 4.

Reed-Custer at Seneca

Facing a tough Seneca lineup, Reed-Custer struggled to generate offense, falling 10-0. The Lady Comets managed just one hit on the day, with Seneca breaking the game open with a 7-run second inning.

Kaelyn Fritas had the one hit in 3 at-bats
Steichen went 4 innings, allowing 10 runs (only 1 earned) on 6 hits

while striking out 6 and walking 1. The Reed-Custer defense committed 7 errors behind her.

The Lady Comets closed the week with an overall record of 1-6-1. While errors proved costly in both contests, the team showed flashes of offensive firepower in their tie against Limestone, putting together 11 runs with contributions from throughout the lineup. Pitcher Steichen anchored the team, striking out 13 batters across the two games while also providing key offense at the plate.

With steady hitting from players like Fritas, Henderson and Vanek, and consistent work from Steichen in the circle, Reed-Custer looks to turn competitive play into wins as the season continues.

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COMET SPORTS



Photo by Angela Rose

REED-CUSTER'S VARSITY football team huddles in the endzone prior to the start of Friday's game at El Paso-Gridley. The Comets may have lost the season opener 28-14 but gain confidence heading into Friday's first home game of the season against Harvard.

Titans athleticism too much for Comets

BY JIM SHELDON
SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

Defeating a consistent playoff caliber program is no easy feat.

Reed-Custer did a lot of good things in the season opener Friday in El Paso, but they struggled limiting the explosive plays as the Titans scored multiple 30 plus yard touchdowns en route to a 28-14 win.

"We have to run to the ball, tackle, finish plays and limit those big yardage opportunities," said head coach Joe Turek.

"Yards after the catch was not great for us. Their skill kids are a talented group."

El Paso-Gridley led 7-0 after the first and tacked on a 36 yard touchdown pass on the first play of the second quarter.

The Comets were able to cut the deficit to 14-7 on a Hudson Cook six yard touchdown run, but the hosts struck again before half for a 21-7 advantage.

Thomas Emery added a 28 yard touchdown reception with 2:22 left in the third, but once again, the Titans responded with another touchdown pass.

Quarterback Owen Adams threw four touchdowns on the night with his eight yarder with 10:57 left, proving to be the difference.

"Defensively, we had three sophomores starting so it was a useful, tough experience for them."

"The first game with many formations and movements, it's a lot to throw at them, but Chase Isaac, Eddie Bryan and



Photo by Angela Rose

REED-CUSTER junior Orion Bergmann makes a diving tackle to stop the Titan ballcarrier on Friday.

Nathan Vogler were everywhere.

They are good effort kids and even if their brain was wrong on a play, their effort was there.

For R-C, Jesse Tresouthick was very efficient passing, going 10-for-12 for 88 yards. He also added 10 carries for 35

yards.

"We try to get him to make his read and then it's a quick decision whether he makes that read or not."

"He's been really improving through his progressions. If the first look is not there, he knows where the second one is and makes a quick decision. He

can do it with his legs and his arm, which is pretty nice to have."

They ran for almost 200 yards with Kaiden Klein leading the way with 66 yards on eight carries. He also added three receptions for 25 yards.

Dominic Alaimo had nine carries for 35 yards

and Cook tallied 29 yards on three rushes with a touchdown.

"We like to incorporate a bunch of different guys based on our two main schemes that we have. Alaimo ran hard with a lot of tough yards," said Turek.

"Klein was able to get on the edge a little bit and

get some work done in space for us. We have about seven ball carriers and we feel good about all seven."

Turek was pleased with how his team did against the Titan ground game and felt they controlled the line of scrimmage.

"They only had about 20 yards rushing. We have to continue to read keys."

A couple minor mistakes here or there in our coverages led to them getting the ball in space."

The Comets will host Harvard in the home opener Friday. The Hornets were shut out by Big Foot 10-0 in the opener and were sacked five times.

Harvard has lost eight straight games dating back to last season. Their last win was in Week 2 against R-C, 21-14.

"We're looking forward to the home opener. It was a close game last year and we owe them a little bit. They're more of a downhill running team for the most part that takes their shots."

"If we can build off how we controlled the line of scrimmage, we like our chances with our speed in those skill positions."

Friday's game is part of three consecutive home games with Streator and Manteno also coming to town.

"Our schedule definitely played into our advantage. We know it was a tough battle on Friday, but we also know it was a good learning experience, and this is a good stretch for us that I think our kids are going to enjoy being at home for all of it."



Photo by Angela Rose

A COMET WALL—Reed-Custer seniors Dominic Alaimo (24) and Dhane Debelak (65) make a big stop against a line of El Paso blockers.



Photo by Angela Rose

BLOCKING BUDDIES—Comet sophomore Kaiden Klein sweeps to the outside while following blockers Nathan Vogler (20) and Alejandro Fierro (50)

R-C soccer bounces back with a 9-1 win

The Comets had a great bounce back win after Tuesday's close game, defeating Sandwich 9-1.

Comets goals scored by Matthew Kuban (6-A new school record), Tristan Randall, Brody Alexander, and Jakub Lichaj.

Assists went to Kuban (2), Dylan Maschmeyer (2), Lichaj, Alexander, Randall, and Conor Kochanny.

Vinny Bollino and Nathan Hughes split time in the goal, both recording 1 save.

Serena 4, Reed-Custer 3

Goals: Tristan Randall, Jakub Lichaj, Dylan Maschmeyer

Assists: Randall, Mathew Kuban, Tyler Compton
Saves: Vinny Bollino-7.



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