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Behind the scenes efforts an important step in local development

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

The city of Braidwood has approved a half dozen new businesses over the course of the past couple of years. And while it may not look obvious just looking around town, city leaders say the effort to turn all those plans into real brick and mortar structures are in full swing.

City Administrator Tony Altiery said much of the work to bring those new businesses—and their new tax dollars—to the city is currently in a

'behind the scenes' phase. That means efforts for everything from the planned truck stop to three new car dealerships are all still focusing on the important infrastructure needed before any building can start.

Altiery said the planned truck stop at I-55 and Reed road, D'Orazio and Arnie Bauer sites along EZ Street, an new 15,000 square foot mechanic shop on North Division are all in the engineering phase.

"Everything is in engineering, engineering and attorneys. That's the longest part of anything. Once you get

through those, the building process is the easy part," Altiery said.

Altiery also noted that plans to widen the intersection at EZ Street and Division Street, as well as efforts to clean up the city's interchanges to make getting to the city more appealing to the eye, are also underway.

"We're working on the turn lanes [at EZ Street], that was just finished up for all the preliminary engineering and sent in for permitting to IDOT. So, we're just waiting on a permit from the state which can take anywhere from three months to a year," Altiery

said. "We did get a hold of IDOT and they came and cut all the grass down in our interchanges, and they're working on getting a contract with a tree service to come and cut some trees out of the interchanges. So, that's moving forward."

A new gaming and liquor shop on Washington Street at the site of the old laundromat currently has its foundation poured, the administrator added.

And, Altiery added, most of the prep work to finally build a new Ultimate Rides location on Hickory

Street is near complete.

"They have all of their dirt work just about done, they were supposed to seed and put grass matting down [on Tuesday, but it snowed]," Altiery said of the dealership, which has been in the works to move from Coal City to Braidwood since 2020. "They're still waiting for material on their building, but they've been spending the last three weeks digging out the detention ponds. They put a berm up around the north side of the property, that

SEE BUSINESS, PAGE 2

Comets quest for state comes to an end



Photo by Zaidie Sims

THE COMET SEASON came to an end after Byron won 32-27 in the third round of the playoffs on Saturday. Despite losing to the Tigers for the second year in a row, the Comets can keep their heads up for having a history-making season with an 11-1 record, something no other Comet football team has accomplished. Details on the game and the season in sports.

Social media helps city leaders get the word out

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

The city of Braidwood has turned its social media into a direct link for residents to ask for information about what's going down around town.

And, after a year of posts seeking information on everything from business to crime

to plans for the future, city leaders said the outreach efforts are working.

City leaders began to utilize the city's Facebook page for information more regularly in 2022. In May, following some questions about what was happening on other social

SEE FACEBOOK, PAGE 2

Camping World finance manager arrested

STAFF REPORT

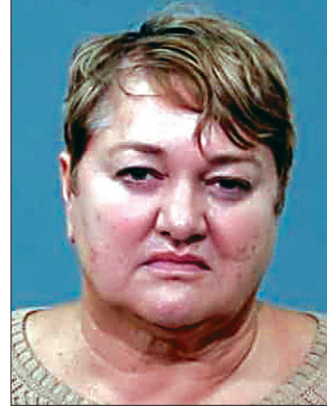
The finance manager at Camping World's Braidwood location is facing charges for allegedly stealing from her employer.

On Nov. 10, Kelli Kapsalis, 58, of Reddick, turned herself in to the Joliet Police Department, after a warrant for her arrest was secured by the Braidwood Police Department.

The arrest followed a eight month investigation by the BPD. On Feb. 22, 2022, the BPD took a report alleging that Kapsalis was stealing money from the Camping World store location on EZ Street on Braidwood's northwest side, along I-55.

On Nov. 9, an arrest warrant was obtained by the Braidwood Police Department for Kapsalis for the following offenses:

- Continuing Financial Crimes Enterprise (Class 1 Felony)
 - Theft (Class 2 Felony)
 - Forgery (Class 3 Felony)
- An undisclosed amount of money was seized during the



KELLI KAPSALIS

course of the eight month investigation.

Kapsalis was released from the Will County Adult Detention Facility after posting 10% of a \$100,000 bond. Her next scheduled court date is Dec. 29.

Editor's note — All persons listed in this police report are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



Two decades in the making Jewel-Osco is coming to Diamond

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

A retail development two decades in the making is official as Jewel-Osco announced a near \$30 million investment in the village of Diamond.

The 40-acre site on the southeast corner of Route 113 and Will Road was acquired in 2004 by TBS Development Services Group, Inc., for

Albertsons, the parent company of Jewel. A 62,000 square-foot grocery store with a pharmacy and Starbucks will anchor the new Diamond Marketplace Shopping Center.

"We are so excited," Diamond Mayor Terry Kernc said following the Nov. 10 announcement.

Kernc and the village of Diamond have been "chasing" Jewel-Osco for about 12 years.

It's a concept that has actually involved four additional administrations—Wilcox, Snith, Ramme and Rolando.

Over the course of her term as mayor, Kernc has consistently reached out to Jewel leadership ensuring the plan to construct a grocery store in the community remained on the docket.

For years she has had the words, "blue jeans, boots, food

and pharmacy," written on a white board that hangs directly across from her desk, and it looks like the latter two will soon be erased as that is just what Jewel-Osco is bringing to the community.

In her pursuit of the grocer, Kernc said she once told the company president that if he did not bring a store to

SEE JEWEL, PAGE 2

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Custer Park tree lighting

The 10th annual Lighting of the Trees will be on Friday, Nov. 18, at 5:45 p.m., at the Custer Park Town Hall.

The Reed-Custer High School madrigal singers and instrumentals will be playing holiday music for the occasion.

Santa will make an appearance at approximately 6:45 p.m. so have your cameras ready. Hot dogs, hot chocolate will be provided all for free.

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Diabetes awareness isn't just for the diagnosed

This has been a difficult year for my health.

Five years ago, I began to deal with symptoms of something that I did not recognize were symptoms. And it was easy to write off those symptoms, one by one.



SIMON SAYS...
Marney Simon

I was incredibly tired, but of course I was tired, I had two teenagers!

I was thirsty all the time. I mean, it was next level thirst, I was putting down several cans of fizzy water every day. But, I had been diagnosed years earlier with eosinophilic esophagitis, a narrowing of the esophagus, which sometimes left me with a very dry throat. That's all it is, I told myself.

My vision was starting to become blurry. Well, of course it is, you can't fence time, it's just the years! I bought stronger readers.

What finally drove me to the doctor was dizziness. I stood up one morning and quickly had to lie right back down, the entire room was spinning. But even that, I figured, was no big deal. I thought maybe I had an ear infection that was giving me vertigo.

So, off I went to my primary care physician. He gave me something for the vertigo and sent me off for my annual labwork.

When it came back, my A1C—a hemoglobin test that measures your average blood glucose over the past three months—was 10.9. A normal A1C is 5.7 or lower. My A1C meant that my average blood glucose was 266, more than 120 points above the higher end of normal glucose.

My doctor diagnosed me with Type 2 diabetes and immediately placed me on oral medications. And those medications seemed to work, at least for a while.

But after a few years, and after adding additional newer medicines, my A1C just didn't want to budge. It hung out a lot around 8.0 to 8.5. Occasionally I would get it down into the 7s, only for it to creep back up.

In October of last year, my doctor put me on yet another new medication. This one had a specific side effect—weight loss. So, when I started to drop weight, I attributed it to the new medication. And let's be honest, I was not unhappy with it. The day I put on size 8 pants, I thought, isn't modern medicine amazing?

Yeah, well. Not so fast.

By February of this year I had dropped down to a weight I had not seen since I was a teenager. I didn't think too much about it, but one day at work I went to talk to Shawn Long, our former sports writer,

who stopped me mid-sentence and said, "Marney, you are so skinny."

He was right. I was skinny. Too skinny.

I finally told my husband, I think I have lost too much weight. He agreed. He hadn't really wanted to say anything because, well, he's a living man and wanted to stay that way and knows better than to comment on a woman's weight. But he had noticed for certain. But by this point, I was just a few weeks out from my next physical. I figured my meds needed to be adjusted.

On Feb. 15, 2022, a Tuesday, I came to work as usual. But the moment I arrived, I threw up. I had been feeling sick and tired for a few days. I thought it was the flu, or maybe even COVID. I hurried through my day and stayed away from everyone, not wanting to get anyone sick. I went home and listened to a Wilmington City Council meeting over Zoom. About an hour later I got sick again, and over the course of the next 30 hours, I was sicker than I had ever been in my life. I was short of breath. My heart was racing. I took a COVID test, it was negative. I thought it was the flu, and I needed to ride it out.

In the predawn hours of Feb. 17, I called out to my husband. I told him he needed to call 911.

It was a good call.

I was in diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA), a serious, life-threatening complication of diabetes that occurs when your body just isn't making enough insulin, or any at all. Without insulin, your body can no longer use sugar for energy, and instead uses fat. The result is a build up of ketones in your blood, turning it too acidic.

I was sent to the ICU on an insulin infusion for two days, followed by two days in med-surg before heading home with a new diagnosis—Type 1 uncontrolled diabetes.

One of the strange things about my diagnosis is how my initial diagnosis of Type 2 affected what was happening to me. I was still checking my glucose pretty regularly, but while it was always elevated it was not sky high. My A1C when I was admitted to the hospital was 7.3, and my glucose was 350, both much lower than what is seen in most people in DKA.

My medications, the endocrinologist said, were masking my symptoms. The weight loss—a known side effect of the medication I was on—is a key indicator of DKA. I had no idea.

More importantly, what we all think we know about

diabetes is not even close to all there is to know about diabetes.

Most people know about the three main types: Gestational, which I had with both of my pregnancies, Type 2, and Type 1, both of which I have now had (a trifecta, I should bet on the horses!).

But what I was likely dealing with this whole time is actually something called LADA—Latent Autoimmune Diabetes in Adults. LADA, which is sometimes referred to as Type 1.5, is essentially the slow roll from Type 2 to Type 1, as your pancreas slowly but surely dies.

There is also Type 3b, which occurs when there is damage to or removal of the pancreas.

Type 1 and Type 3b diabetics are insulin dependent. Some Type 2 diabetics are also insulin dependent.

Since February, I have spent a ridiculous amount of time learning about diabetes. To begin, I was placed on insulin. I use a pen, and while I imagine the time will come when a pump might be a better fit, for now, multiple daily injections are working.

The injection before you eat is called your bolus. The injection of the longer lasting insulin is called your basal. And getting furious that your glucose just won't come down and injecting a correction dose is called a "rage bolus," though obviously that's not a medical term.

I now use a continuous glucose monitor, which means I literally manage this disease every five minutes.

Diabetes occupies my entire days. I am always thinking about my food. I am always thinking about my exercise. I am always thinking about my glucose. I am always thinking about my next injection. I will do this until I die, or until there is a cure, whichever comes first.

It's a horrible disease, and I am aware how lucky I am that I didn't have to deal with it until I was 48 years old. I cannot imagine the struggle this presents for children, for young adults, and for the parents who have seen their sons and daughters in DKA. It was terrifying for my husband. I cannot imagine what it would be like to watch your child deal with this, to have to teach a 10 year old how to manage it, knowing it is forever.

For reasons unknown, the cost of insulin has become political. Before I needed it, I used to think, sure insulin should be cheaper. Now that I need it, I am horrified by the discussion.

Insulin costs about \$5 to \$10 to make. Without insurance, the cost of my insulin is \$1,000 per month.

Insulin is available cheaper in some places—you can

actually purchase OTC insulin at Walmart for \$25 a vial. But the thing is, not all insulin is the same. What you can get for that \$25 may or may not be what works for you. A \$35 cap on insulin is ridiculous on its face, because there is no such thing as a standard monthly supply of insulin.

My insulin to carb ratio (how much insulin I inject for each gram of carbohydrates that I eat) is one unit per 15 grams of carbs. For others, that ratio might be one to 10, or one to five, or even one to one.

Without insulin, all of us who are Type 1—roughly 1.9 million Americans including more than 244,000 children—will die.

November is National Diabetes Month. National months don't always mean a whole lot if you're not directly affected by whatever it is that is being recognized. But, I promise you, we're all affected by diabetes. While those of us with Type 1 only represent between 5% and 10% of total cases, the CDC reports that more than 37 million Americans have diabetes, and 1 in 5 are not even aware they have it. Ninety-six million adults in the United States have prediabetes, and as many as 8 in 10 are unaware.

So, what can you do?

First, there are plenty of places to get information. JDRF and the American Diabetes Association are good places to start.

Second, learn the signs. I certainly didn't know them five years ago, and even after five years managing as a Type 2, I still didn't know anything about Type 1.

Symptoms of diabetes include thirst, weight loss, hunger, blurry vision, tiredness, dry skin, numbness/tingling in hands and feet, and the need to urinate often. Don't write off your symptoms like I did—Type 2 diabetes is manageable and, in some cases, reversible.

Type 1 is not reversible, nor is it preventable.

I would also implore everyone to write to your Congressperson about pushing for affordable insulin.

The cost of insulin is not political. But currently, it's downright criminal. It needs to change.

As for me, as of September, my diagnosis has been changed—Type 1 controlled, with an A1C of 6.2. I've gained back 30 pounds, which I don't love, but it is a good sign.

But I also know not to celebrate. There are no guarantees with this disease that will literally follow me around as long as I'm above ground.

Marney Simon is the editor of the Wilmington Free Press Advocate and the Braidwood Journal. You can reach her at marneysimon@gmail.com.

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Reed-Custer High School The 22nd Annual Madrigal Dinner December 10 and 11, 2022



What is a Madrigal Dinner?

A Madrigal Dinner is a modern-day interpretation of the Medieval feasts held in the great baronial halls throughout England during Christmastime. The royal court would provide entertainment, presided over by a king and queen, joined by court jester, musical ensembles, and itinerant actors. The ambience of the evening is one of warmth, laughter, love, and joy. Everything is in character during the feast. All performers are dressed in period costumes, authentic music is performed, and there is liberal use of old English by everyone from the servants to the king.


The Reed-Custer High School Madrigal Dinner will feature two performances...

Saturday, December 10 at 6:00 PM and Sunday, December 11 at 4:00 PM

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For additional information, call the RCHS Music Department at 815-458-2166 extension 3343 or email kevin.mangan@rc255.net. Order early! This event will sell out fast!

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County buildings go green in support of veterans

Will County buildings are illuminated in green during November as part of Operation Green Light, a nationwide initiative to show support for veterans.

“By shining the green light, we’re showing support for the veterans in our community and thanking them for their service and sacrifices,” said County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant. “This month-long initiative also raises

awareness for resources available to veterans at the federal, state and local level.”

Operation Green Light was initiated by the National Association of Counties and the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers. The goal is to show support for veterans, raise awareness of issues faced by veterans, and to spotlight resources available at all levels of government.

Several Will County facilities are illuminated green at night, including the County Office Building, the Courthouse, and Sunny Hill Nursing Home. Residents are encouraged to participate by changing one light bulb inside or outside of their home.

“I’m proud that Will County is participating in this national initiative,” said County Board member Tom Weigel. “It’s important that we raise awareness of the unique issues faced by veterans and continue to spotlight the resources available to them in our communities. I hope to see more green lights throughout the county this month.”

Veterans are invited to attend a Veterans Rights Seminar being co-hosted with State Senator Meg Loughran Cappel, State Rep. Natalie Manley, and local veterans organizations to learn about available resources. The event will be held Saturday, Nov. 19 from 8 to 10 a.m. at the Grand Haven Clubhouse, located at 1520 Grand Haven Rd. in Romeoville.

To accommodate all guests, registration is required for this event. To register, veterans can visit <https://bit.ly/3f5ikrA> or call (815) 267-6119.



THE WILL COUNTY Courthouse and Courthouse Overhead have been outfitted with green lighting throughout the interior. The lights will switch to green every night in November.

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Classic vs. frozen Margarita

Love them or hate them, the Houston Astros are World Series champions, again. The Astros have been riddled with controversy as a result of numerous cheating allegations following their previous championship run in 2017, now the team and their fans hope that this victory will bring some redemption.

I’m sure that they’re still celebrating in Houston, more than likely with and endless stream of Margaritas. Keep in mind that it was 86 degrees in Houston on Sunday, “Margarita season” is a year-round event in the Lone Star State.

One of the most interesting story lines that came out of the championship run is that of Jim McInvale aka “Mattress Mack”, Houston furniture store owner and philanthropist.

McInvale placed a \$10,000,000 bet on the Astros to win it all and received the largest payout in sports betting history, a cool \$75,000,000. That’s enough to buy a few rounds, let’s toast the end of the 2022 baseball season with a scratch-made Margarita.

You make the call: frozen, or on the rocks? Whichever way that you decide to take your margarita, know that it is only going to be as good as the tequila that goes into the drink. Your Margarita is DOA if you use bad tequila, and there is plenty of tequila out there.

How can you tell the good tequila from the bad tequila? It’s quite simple. The good stuff will have “100% agave” printed on the label.

Beware that some tequila producers will try to use vague language to trick you, such as “made from pure agave”. Only 100% means 100%, and if the bottle does not say 100% agave on it, put it back on the shelf.

Why does this matter? Tequila that is not 100% agave contains artificial caramel coloring, artificial sweeteners, and it’s anybody’s guess as to what else is in that bottle.

Those artificially colored gold tequilas look great in the bottle, but the coloring and the artificial flavoring in the bottle virtually guarantee that you will have the worst hangover that you have had since college.

The tequila aisle is not the place to “save a few bucks”.

When it comes to lime juice, fresh is always best. Avoid the temptation to buy bottled lime juice.

I realize that juicing limes for a few pitchers of Margaritas is labor intensive, but it’s absolutely worth it. If you have a juicer, use it! The manual lime squeezer works as well, but the juicer is faster.

Pro tip: juice as many limes as you think that you will need for a few rounds of drinks, and then store the fresh lime juice in a storm pouer on ice.

If you are standing in the citrus aisle at your local market and need to do some quick mixology math, plan to get approximately 1 oz. of juice out of an average lime.

Take your time when selecting limes from



**THE MARGARITA
COCKTAIL**
Brian Rung

the bin at your local market. Always choose the limes that feel “heavy” compared to the others. More weight = more juice.

Salt, or no salt? If you are going to use salt on your Margarita, use kosher salt. Kosher salt granules are larger than table salt granules and will adhere to the glass better.

There is a proper way to rim your Margarita glass, and it’s not mashing the top of the glass into one of those sombrero-shaped Margarita salt dispensers.

To properly rim your glass with salt, start by pouring some kosher salt onto a small plate. Then, run a lime wedge along the edge of the glass.

Once the lime juice has been applied to the rim of the glass, gently roll the side of the glass with the lime juice on it in the kosher salt.

I leave half of the rim of the glass unsalted, just a personal preference.

Speaking of salt, why limit salt to the rim of the glass if you know that you are a fan of salt? Don’t be afraid to drop a pinch of kosher salt into your Margarita. A pinch of quality kosher salt gives the drink a little “something extra”, experiment until you find the ideal “pinch” of salt.

One note on triple sec: It the unsung hero of the Margarita. The bittersweet orange liqueur tames the burn of the tequila and adds sweetness to an overtly sour drink. If a high-end triple sec is in your budget, go with Cointreau. For quality on a budget go with Bol’s triple sec.

Once you have mastered the Margarita basics you may want to experiment. Add a splash of orange juice, a shot of mezcal, blue curacao, or some prickly pear syrup. Make it your own, you may stumble on to something great.

The **Classic Margarita** (rocks) is built in a shaker and served in a chilled rocks glass.

Combine in shaker:
2 oz. blanco tequila
1/2 oz. triple sec
1 oz. fresh lime juice
1/2 oz. sweetener (simple syrup or agave nectar)

Shake with ice, strain into chilled rocks glass over fresh ice
Garnish with lime wheel

The **Frozen Margarita** is built in a blender, served in a goblet or coupe glass. The recipe below serves 4.

Combine in blender:
1 cup 100% agave tequila
1 cup fresh lime juice
1/2 cup triple sec
2 tablespoons sweetener (simple syrup or agave nectar)

6 cups crushed ice
Blend until smooth
Pour into prepared glasses, garnish with lime wedge

Until next week, enjoy responsibly.

Cookies with Santa Dec. 4

A Cookies with Santa afternoon will be held on Sunday, Dec. 4, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the former St. Rose School building at 626 S. Kankakee St., Wilmington.

Cost is \$5 to pre-register or \$8 the day of the event per child.

To register email: hoopie2012@gmail.com and include your family name and the number of children attending.

Come out to see Santa and have some delicious treats! Special gifts for the first 50 children! Many surprises are in store for everyone! Stop by to visit Santa’s workshop and visit local vendors for last-minute gift ideas. Several photo backdrops will be available for holiday pictures.

Illinois Republicans have a stark fiscal reality

Rep. Tim Ozinga (R-Mokena) made the classic blunder of not focusing on one election at a time. But, his flub does give us an excuse to look at a few fundraising issues.

It's been no secret that Ozinga wanted to be the next House Republican Leader. But he hasn't really been involved in many House Republican races this year and then, the day before election day, all of a sudden reported giving his own campaign fund a million dollars.

not yet been found. Bailey winning the primary probably discouraged potential contributors from seeing a path to any significant wins this year.

This problematic fundraising trend has been going on for quite a few years. The wealthy Bruce Rauner exploited it



CAPITOL FACTS
Rich Miller

to his own advantage by handing out money before, during and after his 2014 gubernatorial bid. After Rauner lost reelection and split for Florida, Griffin stepped in, until he lost the Irvin race and split for Florida.

So, it's either jump into the far-right political bed with Uihlein, or deal with the GOP's stark fiscal reality and scramble every day to raise a few bucks here and there. It's no wonder that Leader Durkin retired. It's just not worth the hassle.

Anyway, there is most definitely a void in the Republican Party structure that wealthy people like Rep. Ozinga can exploit, if only he had pitched in more during the last election instead of waiting to plunk down cash during the leadership race.

And while billionaire Richard Uihlein didn't give money to House Republican Leader Durkin, he did fund a group called Common Sense Reforms independent expen-

diture committee. As I've told you before, it's run by some Illinois Policy Institute honchos, including John Tillman.

According to a State Board of Elections website search, the group reported spending \$1.9 million since early October.

Uihlein used the group in much the same way he helped Bailey through Dan Prof's independent expenditure committee, People Who Play by the Rules PAC. He gave a few bucks to Bailey, but most of his cash went to Profit.

Instead of concentrating the Uihlein cash on some winnable races, though, Common Sense Reforms scattered the spending among 18 House contests, with almost all of the districts receiving about the same amount of mail. I'm not sure if their spending was enough to move the needle in any individual races, but Uihlein and Tillman might have created some goodwill among the very small handful who won.

And, finally, a recent complaint filed against Senate Republican Leader Dan McConchie's campaign highlights a campaign finance law that's being almost completely ignored in Illinois.

State law requires any candidates who receive 33 percent of their funding from a single

person or group to disclose the name of the "sponsoring entity" on their state paperwork.

In Leader McConchie's case, the sponsoring entity was the billionaire Uihlein, who contributed \$2.1 million to McConchie's personal campaign committee in the third quarter, or 78 percent of his total.

A spokesperson for the Board of Elections says that candidates don't have to disclose their sponsoring entities on their "paid for by" advertising disclaimers, although one attorney I consulted disagrees.

But just think of all the candidates with sponsoring entities this year who didn't disclose it. Irvin received tens of millions of dollars from Griffin. Uihlein has been Bailey's sponsoring entity all year long. Kari Steele's Democratic primary bid for Cook County Assessor was almost totally funded by the Operating Engineers Local 150-connected Fight Back Fund's million-dollar contribution.

Strengthening the law to make clear that campaigns have to disclose their sponsors in their advertising probably wouldn't work. Uihlein and Profit could've just set up an entity called "I love Darren Bailey," or something. Money always seems to find a way around regulations.

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

Gas will stay expensive through the holiday

You can buy gas in Illinois near the \$3 mark but you'll have to travel four hours to Quincy, IL. Motorists there were paying \$3.09/g on Monday according to gas Buddy.com.

Locally, gas prices are over \$1 more, averaging \$4.11/g in Braidwood, \$4.19 to \$4.39 in Wilmington and \$4.19 in Coal City.

That's about 14.9 cents per gallon less than the week before with the average at \$4.14/g statewide, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois. Prices in Illinois are 20.6 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 65.2 cents per gallon higher than a year ago.

"After rising the week prior, the

national average has changed directions again, posting a modest weekly decline with prices dropping in a majority of states. The decline has been partly driven by Great Lakes states, where prices fell by 15-25 cents per gallon due to an improvement in the refining situation, and also oil prices, which fell back under \$90 per barrel last week," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

Despite recently declining from summer highs, gas prices this Thanksgiving will be the highest they've ever been for the holiday, and nearly 30 cents per gallon higher than last year. However, more Americans plan to hit the road next week than during Thanksgiving last year, according to a recent GasBuddy study.

The national average price of gasoline has fallen 2.6 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.76/g. The national average price of diesel has risen 2.3 cents in the last week and stands at \$5.34 per gallon.

The national average is down 14.3 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 36.3 cents per gallon higher than a year ago, according to GasBuddy.

"With oil prices remaining volatile, the outlook is murky, but I'm hopeful in the lead up to Thanksgiving we'll see prices declining in more states, while others may not be quite as lucky. Regardless, we'll still be seeing the most expensive Thanksgiving Day prices on record."



Chamber seeks entries for Christmas parade

The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce will host a lighted Christmas parade Saturday, Nov. 26. The parade will start at 5 p.m. at Wilmington Middle School and travel on Ryan to Water Street to the post office. Community groups and local businesses are invited to enter for free while political entries cost \$50.

Anyone is welcome to sign up by Saturday, Nov. 19. Information will be sent to parade entries including map with the lineup. Again, application must be returned no later than November 19. For additional information contact Marty Orr at chamberparade@gmail.com. **Line up at 4 p.m.**

Organization/business: _____

Contact person: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Type of entry (float, equestrian, walkers, antique vehicle, decorated vehicle, if other, describe): _____

Is your entry political, No - \$0, Yes - \$50: _____

Total dimensions of entry (including vehicle pulling float, trailer etc): _____

If there will be any type of sound (siren, music, horns, etc) please describe: _____

Jefferson Street bridge to close for one week

The Illinois Department of Transportation announced that the Cass Street bridge over the Des Plaines River in Joliet has reopened while the Jefferson Street (U.S. 30) bridge will be closed for one week.

The Cass Street bridge was closed in August as part of the ongoing effort to upgrade the movable bridges in Joliet, a project that will allow them to be controlled from a central location.

Shortly after the reopening of Cass Street, the Jefferson Street bridge will be closed

until Nov. 21. The closure is necessary to complete measurements and design plans for the project's upcoming phases.

A detour will be posted. Motorists will be routed to Raynor Avenue (U.S. 52) and McDonough Street (U.S. 52) to cross the river and reconnect with Jefferson Street via Chicago Street (Illinois 53).

Later this month, after Jefferson Street reopens, the McDonough Street bridge is anticipated to close with detours for approximately three months.

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Wilmington pastors to host Thanksgiving Service

The Wilmington Pastor's Association will sponsor a Community Thanksgiving Service on Sunday, Nov. 20, at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 401 E. Kahler Rd., Wilmington. Everyone is invited to join in this service of prayer, music and fellowship. The Wilmington Community Choir and the Praise Ringers bell choir will perform. Rev. Jason Price, Pastor of First Christian Church, will deliver the Thanksgiving sermon.

Will County breaks ground on new morgue, coroner's facility

JOLIET – Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, Will County Coroner Laurie H. Summers and County Board members held a groundbreaking for the new morgue and coroner's facility in Joliet last week.

The construction project will consolidate the Morgue and Coroner's Office into one location, providing more streamlined operations.

"And so it begins. We are excited that construction on the new Coroner's facility will consolidate the administrative staff and the Deputy Coroner's under one roof," said Coroner Summers. "Thank you to the County Board for recognizing the need for a new state of the art facility."

The 11,460 square foot facility will replace an aging and undersized morgue with a new, purpose-built facility that also includes the administrative offices of the Will County Coroner. These functions are currently located in two separate facilities.

"The new morgue is going to improve our public safety capabilities," said Bertino-



AN ARTIST RENDERING shows the new Will County Morgue and Coroner's facility being built on Laraway Road which will be completed in Summer of 2023.

Tarrant. "This modern facility will provide a safe, efficient space for the Coroner's Office to perform their essential duties."

The design of the new facility focuses on operational efficiency, with a clear separation of administrative offices and morgue space to maintain a healthy environment for county personnel.

"Congratulations to Coroner Summers and her staff on the construction of

this facility, which will significantly improve their operations," said Board Speaker Mimi Cowan. "Funding this project was a bi-partisan accomplishment that will benefit the county for years to come."

The new facility will join existing public safety facilities at 16857 W. Laraway Road, including the Public Safety Complex, Sheriff's Department, Animal Control and the

Emergency Management Agency's Emergency Response Facility.

"I'm proud that the Board has prioritized public safety capital projects in recent years," said Board Capital Improvements Chair Herb Brooks. "The new morgue will be an excellent addition to the existing Public Safety Complex." The new facility is projected to be completed in Summer of 2023.

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Proposed bill adds years of jail time for selling fentanyl

SPRINGFIELD – To combat the ongoing fentanyl epidemic in Illinois, two state senators are pushing for a bill that would increase sentencing for anyone caught selling the lethal drug.

State Senator Sally Turner (R-Beason) and Senate Deputy Minority Leader Sue Rezin (R-Morris) held a press conference at the State Capitol with McLean County State's Attorney Erika Reynolds to unveil legislation that creates two new offenses and penalties for individuals who intentionally sell scheduled drugs with fentanyl or use electronic communication devices to sell fentanyl.

"This epidemic grows more serious each year as the number of deaths continues to climb. No longer is this just something that is happening in a far away land, it's happening everywhere," said Senator Sally Turner.

Senate Bill 4221 would amend the manufacture and delivery offense within the Illinois Controlled Substances Act to create a new Class X felony requiring nine to 40 years in prison for unlawfully selling or dispensing any scheduled drug, like Adderall or Vicodin, that contains a detectable amount of fentanyl.

"Nationally, nearly 70,000 people 18 and older died in 2021 from synthetic opioid-related incidents, with 90% of those being fentanyl-related. That is equivalent to one plane crashing each and every day," said Senator Sue Rezin. "In Illinois, we have seen the number of synthetic opioid deaths jump from 87 in 2013 to 2,672 in 2021. That means in less than one decade, the state of Illinois saw nearly a 3,000 percent increase in synthetic opioid overdose deaths. We cannot and should not continue to turn a blind eye to this

staggering trend."

Senate Bill 4221 would also expand the controlled substance trafficking offense to create a new Class 1 felony, which would come with a fine up to \$100,000 for anyone using an electronic communications device in the furtherance of controlled substance trafficking involving a substance containing any amount of fentanyl.

Turner and Rezin hope to see this legislation move through the legislative process this veto session.

Drawing by Cruz I.

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Email submissions or if you have questions contact: GymshoeArt@gmail.com

We need more drawings! Help us express kindness! Create!

Coal City United Methodist Church to hold soup supper

Coal City United Methodist Church, 6805 E. McArdle Road in Coal City, will hold a Hallelujah" Soup Supper on Saturday, Dec. 3 from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

They will be serving delicious homemade chicken noodle and stuffed green pepper soups. Each meal includes

your choice of soup, a sandwich, crackers, a beverage, ice cream & dessert.

Carry-outs are available. The cost is \$12 for ages 13 & older; \$5 for children ages 3 - 12; and children age 2 & under eat free. All proceeds will go to the church's building fund. Tickets will be sold at the door.

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Santa Claus will be visiting Festival of Trees Sat. & Sun., Dec. 3 & 4 1 - 3 pm

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SATURDAY DECEMBER 3, 2022
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Coyote sightings are up in urban areas

Dear EarthTalk: Why are coyote sightings so much more common in urban areas these days? Should I be worried about kids and pets outside? Is this a bad sign for the environment at large and is there a humane way to deter these carnivores from residential areas?
 -- Max B., Norwalk, CT

EARTH TALK

Questions & Answers About Our Environment



Courtesy photo by: Esteban Arango

COYOTES ARE becoming more & more common in urban & suburban areas across the U.S. and there's not much we can do about it...

Coyotes, known as the Song Dogs of North America, are the sole canid predator endemic to North America. They can be found as far north as Canada and Alaska, and as far south as Central America, but are most prevalent in the Great Plains, where they began their outward migration 100 years ago.

Since the 1950s, they've managed to expand their territory by 40 percent, and can now be found anywhere from remote plains to bustling urban parks.

As many experts agree, the coyote is an incredibly adaptive animal. This evolutionary advantage has kept the species not only surviving, but thriving in response to human expansion.

This is one of the reasons the coyote has prevailed where other species have faltered, and why their sightings have only increased along with urbanization. Coyotes are flexible creatures on many counts: their time of activity, their preferred habitat, even their diet.

When they aren't eating rabbits or small rodents, coyotes can be seen eating small

fruits like berries and apples, and even vegetables like carrots to maintain their daily caloric needs.

Coyotes also have flexible temperaments. They are aggressive enough to hunt small prey, but skittish enough to avoid deadly human contact. Indeed, coyotes are relatively harmless to humans (but they will definitely eat a small pet!).

A 2021 study from Madison, Wisconsin discovered that most human-coyote interactions were benign, lacking any aggression by the coyotes whatsoever. When participants in the study were asked to pick a number from zero (calm) to five (aggressive), 90 percent chose zero.

That being said, they are not completely harmless to humans and should always be approached with caution. Last year, four people were injured by a coyote in San Francisco, including a four-year-old.

Counterintuitively, of all the factors influencing coyote population increases, one of the greatest may be population control.

According to multiple studies conducted since the 1970s, the indiscriminate killing of coyotes, which has occurred for decades across all of North America, causes what is known as pack disruption, whereby normally "sterile" females become sexually active in a pack when an alpha male or female is killed.

This phenomenon inevitably led to a positive feedback loop, where the encouragement of hunting reduced coyote population levels in the short-term, but increased them in the long-term.

Coyotes are considered a keystone species, meaning

their presence or absence significantly influences an ecosystem.

This also means their overabundance can lead to ecosystem disruption.

If you're looking to humanely deal with a coyote, hazing—waving your arms and yelling—is often considered the best method of deterrence. Keeping pets inside and live-stock penned securely is also encouraged, as is the removal of any garbage or pet food that you may have outside.

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New, improved Weber Road opens

The Illinois Department of Transportation is celebrating the completion of the new and-improved Weber Road interchange, part of a \$96.7 million investment to improve safety and mobility.

"After years of construction and tens of millions of dollars, I'm thrilled to announce that improvements to the Weber Road interchange have been completed," said Governor JB Pritzker.

Motorists, bikers, and pedestrians will see added

lanes and modernized traffic signals.

The project's \$75.7 million centerpiece involved widening Weber Road and reconfiguring the interchange with Interstate 55 into a diverging-diamond design. By routing vehicles to the opposite side of Weber Road and eliminating left turns across traffic, the design will help to decrease crashes and improve pedestrian and bicycle access across I-55.

It is one of several projects in Will County this year,

including more than \$200 million in improvements along I-55, such as the \$48 million resurfacing between Interstate 80 and Weber Road.

Included in IDOT's six-

year program are the \$1.2 billion reconstruction of I-80 and four other I-55 interchanges: as well as \$140.4 million for Lorenzo Road and Illinois 129 near Braidwood.

Elwood School District accepting bids for 2023 window modifications

PUBLIC NOTICE

Elwood CCSD 203 Accepting Bids

1.1 BID INFORMATION
 A. Sealed bids will be received by the Board of Education, Elwood Community Consolidated School District 203, on November 29, 2022 at 2:00 p.m. prevailing time for the 2023 Window Modifications. Bids will be opened at the District Office, 409 North Chicago Avenue, Elwood, Illinois 60421.
 B. A Non-Mandatory Pre-Bid Conference will be held on November 9, 2022, 3:00 p.m. at Elwood School, 409 North Chicago Avenue, Elwood, Illinois 60421. All Bidders are encouraged to attend and sign in at the meeting which will also be attended by the Owner, Architect and Engineer.
 C. Anticipated Award of Contract date: December 13, 2022
 D. Anticipated Start of Construction: Base Bid: June 12, 2023; Alternate #1: May 10, 2023
 E. Anticipated Substantial Completion date: Base Bid: July 31, 2023; Alternate #1: July 7, 2023
 F. Lump sum bid proposals will be received for this project at the scheduled time of receipt bids and will be publicly opened at that time.
 G. Bid security in the form of a bid bond, certified check or cash in an amount equal to 10 percent of the base bid amount shall be submitted with the bid. Should a bid bond be submitted, the bid bond shall be payable to the Board of Education, Elwood Community Consolidated School District 203.
 H. Bids shall be submitted on or before the specified closing time in an opaque sealed envelope addressed to: Mr. Tim Page, Superintendent.
 I. The District reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, or waive any irregularities or informalities, and to make the award in the best interest of the District.
 J. All bidders must comply with applicable Illinois Law requiring the payment of prevailing wages by all Contractors working on public works. Bidder must comply with the Illinois Statutory requirements regarding labor, including Equal Employment Opportunity Laws.
 K. Bidding documents are on file and may be obtained upon receipt of deposit in the amount of \$100 for 1 set of the bidding documents consisting of 2 sets of plans, 2 Project Manuals, 1 Compact Disc containing PDF files of drawings and project manual, and 1 set of bid forms from: Gill Reprographics, Inc. (GRI), 17W715 Butterfield Road, Suite B, Oak Brook Terrace, IL 60181, (630) 652-0800, www.gillrepro.com. If only digital files of bidding documents are requested, a one time non-refundable fee of \$15.00 (payable to Gill Reprographics, Inc.) can be paid. Login information to download digital files will be provided by Gill Reprographics, Inc.
 L. The Architect for the above referenced project is TRIA Architecture, Inc., (630) 455-4500.

The Board of Education
 Elwood Community Consolidated School District 203
 409 North Chicago Avenue
 Elwood, Illinois 60421

Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022.

City of Wilmington seeks new bids for North Island Lift Station repairs

PUBLIC NOTICE

INVITATION TO BID

Sealed Bids will be received by the City of Wilmington for "North Island Lift Station Improvements RE-BID" and is further described as follows: Full replacement of pumping system in existing lift station and installation of standby generator, and all other work required to provide a complete and operational system.

Bids shall be submitted no later than 2:00 p.m. at the office of the Joie Ziller, Executive Secretary, at 1165 South Water Street, Wilmington, IL 60481 on Tuesday, December 13, 2022. Proposals will be opened and publicly read at that time.

Plans and specifications may be accessed on-line at: www.chamlin.com
 Plans may also be viewed at:
 Chamlin & Associates, Inc., 221 W. Washington Street, Morris, IL 60450
 City of Wilmington, 1165 South Water Street, Wilmington, IL 60481

Full-size plans and specifications are available from Chamlin & Associates, Inc., 4152 Progress Boulevard, Peru, IL 61354 at the non-refundable cost of \$25.00 per set. Bidders are advised that this Contract will be subject to the Illinois Prevailing Wage Act.

The successful Bidder shall provide at least 40% of all labor required for the completion of this project.

The Bid shall be accompanied by a certified check or bid bond, in the amount of five percent (5%) of the gross amount of the bid and be payable to the order of the City of Wilmington.

No Pre-Bid Meeting is scheduled. The bidder is encouraged to visit the site. Questions shall be directed to Don Bixby, 815-223-3344 or donb@chamlin.com.

Bids may be held by the City of Wilmington for a period not to exceed 60 days from the date of the opening of Bids for the purpose of reviewing the Bids and investigating the qualifications of Bidders, prior to awarding of the Contract.

The Owner reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Bids and to waive any informalities in the bidding.

BY ORDER OF:
 MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL
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 Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022.

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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Greek mountain
- 5. One dependent on something
- 11. Gratitude
- 14. Glazed ceramic ware
- 15. Paddling
- 18. Step
- 19. More greasy
- 21. Upper-class young woman
- 23. Light beige
- 24. Belief in a supreme being
- 28. Indigenous people of Scandinavia
- 29. A beloved princess
- 30. Transfer property
- 32. Field force unit
- 33. Automated teller
- 35. When you hope to get there
- 36. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
- 39. Politicians Fischer and Conroy are two
- 41. Blood type
- 42. Stringed instrument
- 44. Curses
- 46. Barbary sheep
- 47. Belonging to a thing
- 49. Supporters
- 52. Leaf-footed bug
- 56. A shower of water
- 58. Attribute to
- 60. Intermittent
- 62. Soda waters
- 63. Scottish island

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Klutz
- 2. Relaxing places
- 3. Expel saliva
- 4. The extended location of something
- 5. Certified
- 6. Cease to exist
- 7. Powerful legal pro
- 8. The OJ trial judge
- 9. Popular greeting
- 10. "90210" actress Spelling
- 12. ___ Blyton, children's author
- 13. "This Is Us" star Fitch
- 16. Battery cell with a nickel alode
- 17. Full of bacteria
- 20. Remains of an old building
- 22. Exist
- 25. It gets you into places
- 26. Witness
- 27. The spreading of a disease to another part of the body
- 29. Father
- 31. Touch gently
- 34. Licensed for Wall Street
- 36. Herring-like fish
- 37. Lute used in N. Indian music
- 38. Mirabel shouldn't talk about him
- 40. Atomic #62
- 43. Religious
- 45. Silvery-white metal (abbr.)
- 48. Influential civil rights organization
- 50. Acknowledgment (abbr.)
- 51. Turn away
- 53. Kidney disease (abbr.)
- 54. Smooth-feeling fabric
- 55. Competently
- 57. Sea eagle
- 58. General's assistant (abbr.)
- 59. It helps you see
- 61. Emerging technology

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COMET SPORTS

Senior leadership will be key to Lady Comets success

BY JIM SHELDON
SPORTS CONTRIBUTOR

Coming off an 11-20 season and a seventh place finish in the Illinois Central Eight conference (4-10), the Reed-Custer girls basketball team will look to their five seniors to lead the way this season: Brooklyn Harding, Caelan Cole, Samantha Sprimont, Laci Newbrough and Addison Harms.

"We are looking for huge production from our senior class. They have plenty of experience playing at the varsity level," said head coach Shelby Zwolinski.

Harding (5'4"), the Lady Comets

leading scorer last season will once again run the point.

She averaged 6.6 points, 2.1 rebounds, 2.6 assists and 1.5 steals per game and was named all-conference and made the R-C Thanksgiving all-tournament team.

"Harding will lead the pack bringing the ball up the floor and has a hot shooting hand on offense."

Cole (5'4") averaged 3.8 points, 2.3 rebounds and 1.5 steals per contest at a guard spot.

Sprimont, a 5'5" forward, averaged 3.0 points and 3.5 rebounds per game.

Newbrough, a 5'9" forward, was a special mention on the all-conference team and recorded 3.8 points

and 5.5 rebounds per game.

"Newbrough, Sprimont, and Cole are going to be huge threats on the defensive end."

The Lady Comets have quite a few newcomers this season who will be counted on: Harms (5'1", guard), junior forwards Kaylee Tribble (5'11") and Madison Keenan (6'0") and sophomores Leah Grace (5'4", guard), Addison Brown (5'10", forward), Natalie Flores (5'6", forward), along with freshman guard Gwen Stewart (5'7").

"We bring a lot of height this year between Tribble and Keenan. We will look to them on both ends of the floor to score and grab rebounds," said Zwolinski.

"Tribble and Keenan both saw varsity minutes last season, but have done a lot off season work this summer/fall to prepare themselves to be offensive scoring threats. We are running a lot of our offense through them by getting the ball inside."

In looking at the ICE conference, Peotone leads the way once again, followed by Herscher and Coal City.

"Lisle, Manteno, Streator, and Wilmington are going to battle during every game. Behind Peotone, the conference is going to be extremely competitive."

R-C opened their season by hosting the Thanksgiving Tipoff Tournament with three games in three days.

Lady Comets pick up their first win of the season against Grant Park, 48-34 Monday. Girls played tough defense and had awesome rebounds. Tribble: 18 pts, 8 rebs, Cole: 9pts, 6 rebs, 4 steals, Harding: 7 pts, 3 rebs.

"We look to continue to be competitive in the ICE conference and are playing a very aggressive schedule this season. The Lady Comets are working to get 1% better each day on the court."

Reed-Custer hosted Wilmington last night and will battle Plainfield Central at 5 p.m. tonight (Wednesday).

With enough wins the Lady Comets will hopefully be playing Saturday in the finals.

Panther defense steals the win from Seneca

The Panthers defeated Seneca by a final score of 32-23. Lead by Jesse Tresouthick, the defense was flying around the court, getting deflections and steals and had several layup opportunities.

Lucas Walsh led in scoring with 12 points. Orion Bergmann dominated the post and had 8 points. Ethan Segoviano contributed with 5, Alex Fierro had 3, Jesse Tresouthick chipped in with 2, and Carson Catron capped off the scoring with 2.

The Panthers are 2-1 on the season and traveled to Peotone for their first road contest

on Monday.

A 46-6 rout

Last night, the 8th grade Panthers defeated Morris ICS by a final score of 46-6. It was a total team effort as several players contributed in scoring and played great defense. Post players Orion Bergmann and Frank Crotty led the way with 11 points each.

Alex Fierro had 7 points, Tyler Compton scored 5, Brandon Pries added 4, and Broden Alexander, Lucas Walsh, Ethan Segoviano, and Carson Catron rounded out the scoring with 2 points each.



DAMIAN SANCHEZ tries to get the ball past Seneca on Wednesday's game at home.

Photo by Zadi Sims



KAIDEN KLEIN shoots the ball for RCMS during Wednesday's game at home against Seneca.

Photo by Zadi Sims



PASSING THE BALL to a teammate is Reed-Custer Middle School's Caedon Baumgartner playing against Seneca on Wednesday at home.

Photo by Zadi Sims

Stahl leads Panthers in scoring

The Reed-Custer Middle School 6th grade A team fell to Dwight last week 10-4.

The Panthers were led by Corbin Stahl with 4 points. The boys played hard and battled all game.

The Panthers will right the ship and get back after it on Tuesday against ICS. Game results to follow in next week's edition.

Lady Panthers on a streak

The 7th grade girls basketball team had won three straight after defeating Sandwich, 18-10.

Everyone on the team contributed to the victory, including six girls scoring for the Panthers.

The leading scorer was Kamryn Wilkey with 9 points. Adalyn Steichen, Olivia Bauer, Sophie Moyers, and Olivia Barbush had a bucket each, while Selah Walsh made one out of her two free throws to add in a point for her team.

Kadance Van Dyne, Gabbi Williams, and Rylee Quigley each had big rebounds for the Panthers.



Photo by Zadi Sims

MAKING A BASKET is Kaiden Klein playing against Seneca on Wednesday's game at home.

Kuban's 16 points sparks JV Panthers

Reed-Custer traveled to Peotone Monday to cruise to a 24-8 victory led by Matthew Kuban and his 16 points.

The team played great defense and forced several turnovers. Adding to the scoring was Kaiden Klein with four points. Collin Hakey and Chase Isaac each added two points.

The Panthers (3-1) hosted MVK (Mazon) Tuesday. Come on out and support RCMS basketball!

Loss to Raiders

Reed-Custer was defeated by the Seneca Raiders in a thrilling game last week. The final score was 24-21, but the team battled back from a 17-2 half-time deficit, and lost their starting guard, Matthew Kuban to a hand injury.

The Panthers tightened up their defense in the third quarter, giving up just two points.

The fourth quarter was all Kaiden Klein as

he scored 10 of the team's 12 points, including two huge three-pointers; the second of which came with five seconds left in the game to cut the Seneca lead to 24-21. The comeback ended there, however.

Klein ended the game with 15 points. Chase Isaac scored four points, and Trent Boudreau finished with two points.

Balanced attack

The Panthers defeated Morris ICS in a dominant performance. The final score was 34-9 with six different players contributing to the total.

Kaiden Klein and Matthew Kuban led the team with 11 points apiece.

Jagger Garcia and Chase Isaac each scored four points. Carson Lowe and Eddie Bryan each contributed two points.

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Quarterfinal heartbreaker:

Byron stuns Comets in final seconds for second straight year

BY JIM SHELDON
SPORTS CONTRIBUTOR

Déjà vu: a feeling of having already experienced the present situation.

Unfortunately for the Reed-Custer football team (11-1), the business remains unfinished as Byron's Caden Considine scored a one-yard touchdown run with 15 seconds left to give the host Tigers (11-1) a 32-27 win Saturday in the Class 3A quarterfinals.

Last season, it was a touchdown pass with nine seconds left that gave Byron a 28-24 win.

"Literally the exact same situation. I felt good once we scored," said head coach Gavin Johnston.

"We rallied the defense together and said we've been here before, we're a different team. This isn't going to happen and sure enough it did."

Josh Bohac broke away for a 40 yard touchdown run with 1:56 left for a 27-25 Comet advantage, but the home side wouldn't be denied, helped by two costly R-C penalties.

"It's just really unfortunate. Sometimes in these sort of games to make a nice run in the playoffs, you need a couple breaks to go your way too no matter how good you are."

"I don't feel like we caught any breaks in that game. If there were any 50-50 situations, it always went to Byron. Not to take anything away from our kids, it was just one of those days where the ball wasn't bouncing our way and unfortunately we weren't able to overcome that."

The first half was a back-and-forth affair with the Comets striking first on a seven yard touchdown run by Lucas Foote.

Byron answered with back-to-back touchdowns, a seven yard run by quarterback Braden Smith and a 45 yard pass to Ashton Henkel.

R-C was able to respond late in the first half as Jake McPherson found Peyton Bradley for a 11 yard touchdown reception with 2:18 left in the second. The two-point pass to Bohac was successful and the Comets held a 15-14 half-time advantage.

But Byron would score the next 10 points, helped by a controversial 34 yd td catch by Henkel.

"We were right there on some of those passes, but nobody could ever convince me that he caught it," said Johnston.



Photo by Zadie Sims

TOUCHDOWN made by Josh Bohac against Byron on Saturday in the fourth quarter of the game.

"We knew their quarterback could throw it and Henkel could run and catch and sure enough he did it twice and that was definitely the difference in the game."

But with their backs against the wall, facing their largest deficit of the season, the Comets answered the bell. Bohac scurried in for a two yard touchdown with less than a minute left in the third, to make it a four-point deficit (25-21) heading to the final frame, setting the stage for the late game heroics.

It's easy to look back on the final drive as the difference in the game, but R-C had multiple missed opportunities early to build a two-score lead.

"We had a bad snap on our first drive on fourth down, scored on our second and had a turnover on downs on the third."

"Realistically, it could have been 14-0 or

21-0 in the first quarter. We shot ourselves in the foot and in the long run, it affected the outcome too."

Bohac stepped in for a suspended Jace Christian and filled his shoes admirably with 113 yards on 20 carries and two second half tds.

"He played phenomenal both offensively and defensively. It's really just the story of his year. He was a huge piece of our defense which enabled us to make the strides that we did defensively."

"It's great to see all the hard work that he did all year pay off. He ran hard. He was battling a shoulder injury and played through it, really proud of how well he played."

McPherson finished 13-for-20 for 113 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions and rushed 10 times for 30 yards. Foote added 58 yards on 12 rushes and two catches for 16

yards. Brandon Moorman tallied 18 yards rushing on two attempts and hauled in four passes for 28 yards.

The Comets leading receiver was Wesley Shats with 38 yards on three receptions and Bradley recorded four catches for 31 yards.

They outgained Byron 332-264 and ran 64 plays to 47 for the Tigers, but R-C committed four turnovers to just one for the home side.

They held Byron to their lowest rushing total since Week 1 (156 yards).

"We felt we had to load the box up a little bit more without Jace on defense and it made us a bit more susceptible to the pass."

Defensively Zack Cieslak led the charge with 7.5 tackles and Moorman (sack), Foote and Kody Marschner all had five stops. Bohac and Bradley both made four tackles and Gavin Bruciak added 3.5 stops.

Gunnar Berg and Rex Pfeifer both tallied three tackles and Shats was in on 2.5 stops. Also recording a tackle were McPherson and Connor Esparza.

The Comets close out a historic season with a school record 11 wins, ending a two-year stretch with a 21-3 record and the first two quarterfinal appearances in school history. In the previous 12 seasons dating back to 2009, they won a total of 22 games. Quite the turnaround for a program clearly on the rise.

"They are phenomenal kids who made practice fun every single day. They are a joy to be around and great role models. They always take the time to talk to younger kids and do a lot of things in the community," said Johnston.

"The thing that gave me a little peace is on the bus ride home, our kids were laughing, having a great time, hanging out and being friends."

"I was kinda worried how they would handle the tough loss, but to see them smile and hold their heads up high, knowing they gave it their all and how much work they did to get to this point, it makes it all worth it."

It's always tough to let go of the seniors when the season ends, but what this group accomplished won't soon be forgotten by the community of Braidwood.

Special mention to Berg, Bohac, Bruciak, Christian, Foote, Marschner, McPherson and Moorman for making the Illinois Central Eight's all-conference team.



Photo by Zadie Sims

JEREMY EGGLESTON and Cooper Smith get fired up after the Comets took the lead in the first half of Saturday's game at Byron.



Photo by Zadie Sims

LUCAS FOOTE claps as Kody Marschner (59) prevents Byron from getting a first down on Saturday.



Photo by Zadie Sims

HEY COMETS! Offensive coordinator Nick Klein signals in the next play for Reed-Custer during the second half of Saturday's quarterfinal game at Byron.



Photo by Zadie Sims

JOSH BOHAC keeps his footing despite being hit while carrying the ball against Byron during Saturday's game.



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