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RCHS welcomes NHS inductees



REED-CUSTER HIGH SCHOOL held its 63rd National Honor Society Induction ceremony on Wednesday, Dec. 18, in the RCCHS Cafeteria. Congratulations to our new inductees, pictured (from left) are Jaida Davis, Miley Morris, Gwen Stewart, Abigail Solis, Ana Smith, Mark Martinez, Ella Anderson, Tristan Randall, Kaylei Potoski, and Skylar Wilkins.

Owner of ‘Art on 66’ returns home to find peace

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

It was a long journey home for Rachel Conforti, 47, owner and curator of Art on 66. After 20 years in the west, Conforti and her daughter Siena recently returned to Wilmington.

A pharmacist by trade, Conforti returned to Wilmington from Arizona to heal. You see, her 14-year-old daughter, Sabrina, passed away on Nov. 14, 2021. Exactly one year and one day later, her ex-husband, Joe Conforti, died.

“I lost my daughter Sabrina to cancer,” Conforti said. “Then we lost her father, who was my ex-husband. I felt we needed to get back to Wilmington where my parents live. We needed to come back home.”

A Wilmington native, Conforti attended St. Rose School, and took the idea of Route 66 for granted. It was merely a tourist trap that meandered through town. Though she loved Wilmington, she longed to travel, to explore the world. Wanderlust drew her heart to the west.

“The past 20 years, I’ve been living out west, and my daughter and I just moved back here in 2023,” Conforti said. “We were in Scottsdale, Arizona for three years. Before that, we were in Nevada for 14 years.”

Conforti returned to Arizona briefly before returning to Illinois.

“We moved from Nevada to Phoenix because medical treatment there was better for Sabrina,” Conforti said. “She was stable at the time but, we were hoping, God forbid, to have the treatment facilities within 20 minutes if her cancer returned.”

Tragically, Sabrina succumbed to cancer. Then, her ex-husband passed. Conforti and her daughter, Siena, left the west on the road she once viewed as a tourist trap but now became her lifeline between Phoenix and Wilmington.

Seeking peace



Photo by Eric Fisher

ART ON 66 studio owner Rachel Confort finds comfort in art at her new studio on North Water Street in Wilmington.

Conforti is manager of a Walmart pharmacy, where she works 25 hours per week. While she had no desire to work 40 hours, she found herself with too much time on her hands to question fate. She needed to find something to do to quiet her mind.

“I thought I’d like to go into business for myself,” Conforti said. “The outside of Wilmington downtown has a vibe, and it’s a familiar vibe. The antique stores are great. But, I wanted something different.”

Meandering down Water Street, Conforti spotted the old Watch Shop. She imagined works

of art along the walls. She envisioned herself as curator and shop owner. The old building called to her, and she answered tentatively. Perhaps art would soothe her soul.

“The owners, Cheryl Baron and Pat Baron, decided to rehab it,” Conforti said. “The ceiling was falling in. The floor was falling apart. They had to remodel the entire front of it.”

When Conforti explained her plans for an art gallery, the owners informed her the “Watch Shop” sign would have to remain. To Conforti, it was a sign.

“I was excited because the sign would be perfect, like his-

toric,” Conforti said.

Learning a new trade

Though Conforti had never before owned a shop, she was already in a management and well versed in customer service as manager of a pharmacy.

“I took some online classes and went to a couple like art expos,” Conforti said. “It all felt right, and it fell into place.”

Once she felt settled and relatively confident, she reached out to local artists. That too, fell into place, as a respectable number of artists responded.

“I host all these artists and they do beautiful work,” Conforti said. “And I try to keep it eclectic.

It’s all modern art. Some pieces are more contemporary.”

Art on 66 features original art by Mary N. Carnahan, Rick Decorie, Karyn Denten, Jennifer Diver, Barbara Eberhard, Rebecca Marfise, Warren Miller, Robert Ryan, Lizzie Selle, and Erika Vazzana.

A variety of styles and media are offered, including Americana, with Wilmington’s mascot, the Gemini Giant, featured in a number of works.

A miniature Gemini Giant taped to the gallery wall is a nod to Conforti’s quirky sense of humor, with a nod to artist Maurizio Cattalon, who auctioned off a banana taped to a wall for \$6.24 million at Sotheby’s in New York.

“I was like, oh we have to do something like that,” Conforti said. “That was great, hilarious. I still can’t get enough of it. So, we did our own interpretation.”

A commemorative piece by Robert Ryan, featuring the Gemini Giant against the backdrop of a Route 66 road sign sold Nov. 30, the very same day the Gemini Giant returned to town.

“It was such a hit that the artist has decided to do some limited edition prints,” Conforti said.

Artist Bill Law focuses on time. He designs abstract clocks. Whether incidentally or purposefully, his work pays tribute to the former watch shop.

Something for everyone

Opening night, Oct. 12, attracted more than 200 people to the gallery, many leaving the shop with original art in hand and a smile on their face.

Featured is a painting of an extroverted fellow capering along the banks of the Kankakee River with a cigar in his mouth.

“This guy is a huge hit,”

SEE ART ON 66 PAGE 2





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The famous people we meet may not be so famous after all

"Papa, have you ever met anyone famous?"

The question came from my granddaughter Layla, a second grader, who has the curiosity of someone twice her age.

"I still remember the day I met my first famous person," I said as I sat next to her to give her the details.

We were standing near the tarmac outside the airport in Burlington, IA. It was early afternoon and a twin turbo-prop aircraft was taxiing to a stop. A sudden rush of air from the prop wash blew the cowboy hat off my head.

My younger sister, Janet, complained to mom about the burning smell of jet fuel. Yet she laughed as I took off running after my hat. I wouldn't look right dressed in a Western shirt, jeans, cowboy boots and a pair of toy pistols holstered on my hips without my cowboy hat.

We waited behind the fence for the door on the plane to open. What seemed like "forever" was probably just a minute or two before people were

exiting onto the ramp steps. Among them was Ken Curtis, better known as the American actor/singer Festus Haggen of the long-running Western TV series "Gunsmoke."

At age 5 years old I expected to see Festus dressed like he was on TV. But there he was wearing dress pants and a white shirt. Was I ever disappointed.

Still, he lived up to character as a scruffy old deputy on the TV show as my mother, Janet, introduced herself then my sister and me. He winked and commented how he liked my cowboy duds.

Festus came to Iowa to perform during the three-day Tri-State Rodeo that would take place in Fort Madison, IA.

Little did he know that we were his ride.

Our mother was a volunteer on the Tri-State Rodeo committee. Among

her duties was to make sure Festus had ground transportation to his hotel.

It being 1965 in the middle of where the tall corn grows, my guess is the nearest limousine was half the state away. So being the wise mother that she was, the Fisher limo, a big blue Chevy station wagon, would serve just as well. And it came with two youngsters riding in the back.

We had been warned to behave, or else, so for the 20-mile ride back home to Fort Madison, little Janet and I sat in the back while mom drove and Festus rode shotgun. I don't recall exactly what was said but I do recall me pointing my pistols out the window at cows on the way home.

Layla laughed, "That's funny Papa that you were shooting at cows," she said. Then she asked if I had met anyone else.

I told her about when I was in first grade our family rode a jet to California to visit Disneyland. My father George was publisher of the Evening Democrat, in Fort Madison, owned by McGiffin Company who also had newspapers in California. So we had "connections" when we got there, including a tour of Universal Studios.

Our family of 10 was given an escort to walk the grounds. We got to meet Art Linkletter, the host of the Art Linkletter Show, a popular TV series that started in 1963. He commented that he was impressed that our family got dressed up to go on vacation. We all laughed, as we stood getting our photo taken with Mr. Linkletter. But deep down it made me question why as a youngster from Iowa, I had to where a suit and tie while on vacation.

Little Layla laughed at that too when I told her of our California trip.

"Oh, I forgot. That's when we met the Smothers Brothers!" I exclaimed.

The Fishers were riding an elevator down the main building at Universal when it stopped short of the lobby and the doors opened. Waiting to get on were The Smothers Brothers, Tom and Dick, hosts of a popular comedy show.

"Whoa are these all yours?" Tommy joked as he made eye contact with our parents. "You've got enough to fill an elevator! That's okay, we'll wait for the next one."

There was another time I met someone famous on an elevator. The year was 1973, I was 12, waiting with sister Janet to get on an elevator at a hotel in South Bend, Ind. We were there to visit brothers Marc and Alan who were attending the University of Notre Dame.

The doors opened, Janet and I stepped in for the ride up, when suddenly we were squished into a corner by an entourage with Lionel Richie. They were a laughing, festive group carrying cocktails



CHICAGO MAYOR Richard M. Daley took the time to meet with Janet and I during an event in November, 2011.

and bottles but there was a distinct smell that was a little skunky. We found out later the Commodores had a concert that night at ND.

Speaking of the Irish I can't leave out the time I sipped a vodka tonic in the same room as football coach Lou Holtz the year after Notre Dame won the 1988 national championship. We printed the programs for the Notre Dame Club of Chicago and brother Alan invited me to the VIP reception before their annual banquet.

I explain to Layla that Holtz was probably the most motivational speaker I've ever heard.

I told Layla I also met the Mayor of Chicago, Richard M. Daley in November of 2011. My bride, Janet, and I were invited to the Irish Fellowship Club of Chicago where Daley would accept the grand marshal of the St. Patrick's Day parade. We lined up to have our photograph taken with the mayor. When out turn came we stepped up and Daley asked, "Where you folks from?" "Wilmington," we replied. He knew the town, he said. "That's where they've got that green giant." Evidence the Gemini Giant truly is iconic.

I also told her I got to meet George W. Bush. He was campaigning for president with running mate Dick Cheney, making a train stop in Joliet. I had credentials to join the press corps. Bush passed within

an arm's length as he exited the train. So I stuck out my hand. He stopped, shook it and smiled. He ended up getting my vote, becoming the 43rd president of the U.S., dealing later with the terrorists attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

When I finished my list of famous people I looked at Layla who suddenly perked up.

"Papa is that everyone?" she asked. "I don't think any of those people are famous because I've never heard of them. Besides, I've met someone more famous than all of them," she said. "He's known all over the world."

"He is? Who is that?" I asked.

"Yea, it's Santa"

I had just been upstaged by an 8 year old. She had a good point.

Merry Christmas!



A BUTTON promoted "Festus" and Doc" from the TV Western "Gunsmoke" as the featured entertainment of the 18th annual Tri-State Rodeo in Fort Madison, IA.



TELEVISION HOST Art Linkletter (third from right) stands with the Fisher family during a tour of Universal Studios in California in 1968. Standing front and center is publisher Eric Fisher, second youngest of eight siblings.

Art on 66, continued from page 1

Conforti said. "He's one of my favorites, too. Everyone knows the guy; he is in all of the beach clubs around here."

Return to the river

Conforti paces the length of her shop, gingerly touching some of the art pieces en route. She opens the back door, and there is the Kankakee River. A frigid wind blows through

the shop.

Conforti loves to listen to the perpetual splash of the "waterfall" outside her door and remembers being a child.

"My cousin and I would sit on those boulders by the river," Conforti said. "He'd hunt for crawdads and I'd just sit and watch the waterfall."

At 47, Conforti is dividing her time between

her work as a pharmacist and her sideline as an art curator. Every single moment is filled. Conforti said she likes to stay busy. She smiles tentatively, then a tear escapes before she can blink it back.

"I'm sorry, sometimes that just happens," she said.

Healing and peace

"What I love about this place is nothing is truly an emergency," Conforti said. "There are really no art emergencies like there are pharmacy emergencies... or medical emergencies."

Conforti appears serene seated at her minimalist desk. The floor of the shop has been expoxied, gleaming like a river through a riot of color and texture. The shop is her place of peace.

Her days are filled, and she understands grief is a journey, similar to the one from Arizona to Wilmington via Route 66.

She looks forward to the passage of time. She imagines retiring and spending more time savoring art. She grins and the sadness leaves her eyes.

"Oh my God. I would love to be here full-time when I retire," Conforti said. "I've even looked at jobs like big international art festivals. I love to travel."

Meanwhile, Conforti is relieved to be home, cherishing her 15-year-old daughter, Siena, a sophomore at Wilmington High School. She knows the gray, frigid days of winter will be replaced by balmy breezes of springtime. She can even imagine the tourists descending upon her shop as they journey down the Mother Road. And when they do, she'll send them on their way with original pieces of art.

"Siena tells me that 2025 will be our year," Conforti said. "I'm really looking forward to that."

Visit the Art on 66 shop at 208 N. Water St., Wilmington. Their website is www.arton66.com. Call (815) 374-0499 or email support@arton66.com.

Attorney Berardi files Powers estate notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE
STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS -
IN PROBATE

In the Matter of the Estate of
CHRISTOPHER C. POWERS,
Deceased. Case No.: 2024PR697
CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Christopher C. Powers of New Lenox, Illinois. Letters of Office were issued as Independent Executor on December 9, 2024 to Karen M. Powers whose address is 2751 Saddlewood Ln., Palm Harbor, FL 34685; whose attorney is Berardi and Associates, LLC, 14919 Founders Crossing, Homer Glen, IL 60491.

The estate will be administered without court supervision, unless under Section 28-4 of the Probate Act any interested person terminates independent administration at any time by mailing or delivering a petition to terminate to the clerk.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at Will County Court House, 100 West Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, within 6 months from the first publication date of this Notice, which is on or before June 18, 2025, or if mailing or delivery of this notice from the personal representative is required by Sec. 18.3 of the Probate Act of 1995, the date stated in that Notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.

E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider.

Visit <https://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit <http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp>, or talk with your local circuit clerk's office.

Karen M. Powers,
Independent Executor for the
estate of Christopher C. Powers.
Mark M. Berardi, Attorney at Law,
Attorney No.: 6305463,
14919 Founders Crossing,
Homer Glen, IL 60491
(708) 942-8030
Email: mark@berardilawoffice.com
Published in the Braidwood
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25, 2024 and Jan. 1, 2025.

Attorney Berardi files Cleary estate notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE
STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS -
IN PROBATE

In the Matter of the Estate of
DOROTHY A. CLEARY, Deceased.
Case No.: 2024PR613
CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Dorothy A. Cleary of Mokena, Illinois. Letters of Office were issued as Independent Executor on December 9, 2024 to James D. Cleary whose address is 9431 Birch Ave., Mokena, IL 60448; whose attorney is Berardi and Associates, LLC, 14919 Founders Crossing, Homer Glen, IL 60491.

The estate will be administered without court supervision, unless under Section 28-4 of the Probate Act any interested person terminates independent administration at any time by mailing or delivering a petition to terminate to the clerk.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at Will County Court House, 100 West Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, within 6 months from the first publication date of this Notice, which is on or before June 18, 2025, or if mailing or delivery of this notice from the personal representative is required by Sec. 18.3 of the Probate Act of 1995, the date stated in that Notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.

E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider.

Visit <https://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit <http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp>, or talk with your local circuit clerk's office.

James D. Cleary,
Independent Executor for the
estate of Dorothy A. Cleary.
Mark M. Berardi, Attorney at Law,
Attorney No.: 6305463,
14919 Founders Crossing,
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Custer Township sets 2025 meeting dates

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF MEETINGS
UNDER OPEN MEETINGS ACT

NOTICE IS hereby given that Custer Township shall have regular meetings of its Board of Trustees on the following dates for the year, January 1, 2025- December 31, 2025.

These meetings shall commence at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise stated.

Tuesday, January 21, 2025
Tuesday, February 18, 2025
Tuesday, March 18, 2025
Tuesday, April 8, 2025 (7:00 p.m. or directly after Annual Meeting)
Tuesday, May 20, 2025
Tuesday, June 17, 2025
Tuesday, July 15, 2025
Tuesday, August 19, 2025
Tuesday, September 16, 2025
Tuesday, October 21, 2025
Tuesday, November 18, 2025
Tuesday, December 16, 2025
These meetings shall take place at the Custer Township Hall, Grant Street, Custer Park, IL.

The Annual Meeting of the Town Electors for this Township shall take place on April 8th, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. at the Custer Township Hall.

Notice of any special meetings of the Board of Trustees or the Electors shall be given as required by statute.

Any questions concerning meetings of the Board of Trustees or the Electors shall be directed to Christine Olson, Township Clerk, 23125 McGuire Rd., Wilmington, IL (815)458-2756 or e-mail christinson-custertownship@gmail.com
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Merry Christmas



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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The Braidwood Recreation Club will hold its Annual Meeting on Saturday, January 11, 2025 at the Club Office.

One Petition was submitted for the Position of Director; Raymond Marschner. The following incumbents have chosen to run for re-election as well; Russ Toler, Justen Bohac and Mike Foster. Incumbent Bud Montana chose not to run and has retired from The Board of Directors.

All positions for Directors have been filled therefore; No Election.

The following have accepted the Nomination to serve on the Board for a 3-year term. Russ Toler, Justen Bohac, Mike Foster and Raymond Marschner.

The Annual Meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m.

There will be no processing of Club Dues on this day.

Board of Directors
Braidwood Recreation Club



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Eric D. Fisher, publisher

120 years ago, a real Milestone

Hey you, tired of working the same old job for the same old pay? Tired of someone else getting rich on your hard work? Want to get rich in just a few years? Man, have you heard of Milestone?



Sandy Vasko

That was the talk in Custer, Braidwood and Wilmington, the summers of 1904 to 1906. Let's see what it was all about. As the 20th century dawned most people in this area were pretty well settled. This was especially true if you were a farmer. Most good farm land was in the hands of the old settlers and their families. If you were ambitious and wanted to plant another 40 acres of corn to increase your income, you were hard

pressed to find a place to plant it. All the good land was taken. In the coal mining communities, the shaft mines were petering out, and technology for strip mining had not been inventing yet. The idea of owning a farm of your own was extremely tempting.

Then, in 1904 came the word - Milestone, Saskatchewan, Canada. Well that's three words really. But they were magical. And the magician who spoke those words was Frank Vander Bogart.

Frank was the son of a local butcher, one of seven children. It was clear from the start that the lad had ambition and drive, he was only 35 and already he had become Clerk of the Circuit

Court of Will County. And while he made good contacts in government, the pay was not what he wanted. His eyes turned to real estate and he procured the contract from the Luse Land Company, Saskatchewan, Canada to be their sole land agent in this area.

Canada was opening up, thanks to the railroads. Just as railroads in Wilmington took over the grain shipping trade from the canal boats and brought prosperity to rural areas like Florence and Ritchie, so they were making the vast Canadian prairie accessible to men who wanted to grow crops.

Vander Bogart's first modest announcement in the Wilmington Advocate was in September of 1904. We read, "Frank Vander Bogart represents Milestone lands. Reliable information gladly given."



A VIEW OF Milestone, Canada that was first taken in the 1920's.

and, "Milestone lands, soil unsurpassed for fertility, immense grain crops, rapid settlement by Iowa, Illinois and Mississippi Valley farmers. Values advancing \$2.00 to \$5.00 per acre."

Frank found out that most people wouldn't buy a "pig in a poke" meaning they were not interested in land they had not seen. So he started offering excursions to Milestone so they could see with their own eyes.

We read in October, an excellent month to assess a harvest, "\$29.85 (\$1,025 today) round trip fare to Milestone, Canada, from Joliet every Tuesday. Free fare to those buying quarter sections or more."

And while in September the land was going for \$2 (\$69) to \$5 (\$172) an acre, in October we read, "Prairie lands of unsurpassed productiveness, 6 to 9 miles from rapidly growing towns on Soo

line and Canadian Pacific R. R. for \$12 (\$414) to \$14 (\$482) per acre on Milestone strip."

Vander Bogart continued to run excursions well into the winter.

Starting early in the spring of 1905 he continued his ad campaign. He could now mention the name of prominent local farmers who had already purchased land.

We read in October of 1905, "John and Dave Hennebry (Lorenzo) were up to look at Milestone lands last week. They returned enthused with the country, its crops, its rapid settlement, and its wonderful future."

Another prominent farmer from Ritchie was next in the limelight, "George Beckwith accompanied Frank Vander Bogart to investigate Milestone strip (Canada) lands last week, and purchased a section of land.

George pronounces it the best land proposition on the market today."

Vander Bogart experienced good sales for several years, until the first settlers came back with tales of deep snow and arctic cold in the winters. Others, who continued to reside in the area, but farm in Canada had logistic problems.

However, by this time, Vander Bogart had moved to Rockford where he became involved in a metal foundry and eventually rose to the position of treasurer of the firm.

I was interested to know what Milestone looks like now. I found a satellite image of a triangular shaped small town with a railroad going past one side, and totally surrounded by fields of crops. It apparently has changed little since Frank Vander Bogart time, over 120 years ago.



A SATELLITE image of Milestone, Canada.

Braidwood native participating in UA's Coop Ed. program



MAKAYLA WILKINS

University of Alabama student Makayla Wilkins of Braidwood, IL, is participating in UA's Cooperative Education Program during the spring 2025 semester.

Wilkins is working for International Paper.

In the Cooperative Education Program, students alternate periods of full-time study with periods of full-time employment. This program offers work related to the academic major or career interests of each student.

While in school, students carry regular course schedules. While on co-op, they work with professionals in their fields who supervise their training and work. At work, co-op students earn competitive salaries and may receive benefit packages in addition to valuable job experience.

Participants maintain their full-time student status while at work and have priority registration status each semester through graduation.

The University of Alabama, part of The University of Alabama System, is the state's flagship university. UA shapes a better world through its teaching, research and service.

With a global reputation for excellence, UA provides an inclusive, forward-thinking environment and nearly 200 degree programs on a beautiful, student-centered campus. A leader in cutting-edge research, UA advances discovery, creative inquiry and knowledge through more than 30 research centers.



REED-CUSTER Middle School recognized Students of the Month winners for the month of December. The characteristic trait that was focused on was caring/generosity, students include (front, from left) Xadyn Hoffman (6th), Rosemary Woodhall (6th), Landon Reeb (7th), Deanna Lobb (7th) and Mackenzie Cosgrove (7th). Back row: Avah Thompson (8th), Johanna Janopoulos (8th), Avery Vanek (8th), Yvani Berrios (6th), Ryan Haake (7th), Zack Soto (6th) and Chayse Sterling (8th).

Fossil Ridge Library News

Friday, Dec. 27-LIHEAP, 1-3 p.m. This program provides financial aid to households with low incomes to help them meet their energy needs.

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



Flipping out for the Comets

THE REED-CUSTER Cheer team kept the crowd fired up last Tuesday when the boys basketball team hosted Herscher. Performing running flips during a timeout is Lily Castleberry.

Photo by Eric Fisher



REED-CUSTER Middle School ACE winners for the month of December are Rosemary Woodall (6th), Jude Walker (7th), Lauralai Kucera (8th), Molly Dockery (7th), Travis Perona (6th) and Ava Reaska (6th).



REED-CUSTER HIGH SCHOOL
HOME OF THE COMETS

TEACHER
OF THE
MONTH

DECEMBER 2024

MRS. LINDSAY BAIN

"Very kind"
"Positive mood"
"Helps me learn"
"Understanding"
"Honestly just the GOAT"



CONGRATULATIONS TO the RCHS December Teacher of the Month, as voted on by the student body, Senora Lindsay Bain! Students had the following comments to share about Mrs. Bain: "Very kind, positive mood, helps me learn, understanding, and honestly just the GOAT." Mrs. Bain, who is in her 3rd year at RCHS, teaches Spanish I, II, III, and IV, as well sponsoring the Class of 2026 and World Culture Club.

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HAPPY new year 2025

Sales valid 12/26/24-1/25 | STORE HOURS: 7 AM - 9 PM

ALL ITEMS AVAILABILITY BASED ON SUPPLY. QUANTITIES MAY BE LIMITED. NO RAINCHECKS WILL BE PROVIDED.

Berkot's Famous Whole Beef Tenderloins

\$10⁹⁹

PER LB

USDA Choice Angus Filet Mignon - 5 oz portion

\$5⁹⁹

EACH

Jumbo Warm Water Lobster Tails- 10-12 oz

\$19⁹⁹

EACH

A PERFECT PAIRING TO GO WITH YOUR STEAK

Fluffy and Delicious Baker Potatoes **2 FOR \$1**

\$7⁹⁹

PER LB

Australian Lamb Loin Chops

\$5⁹⁹

PER LB

USDA Choice Angus Inside Skirt Steaks- Priced before trimming (Tenderized- \$8.49/lb)

\$4⁹⁹

PER LB

Berkot's FAMOUS Homemade Corned Beef

\$10⁹⁹

lb

LIMIT 1 ROAST
LIMIT 1 OFFER*

Price without coupon: \$15.99/lb

USDA Choice **AMERICAN BEEF** Angus Bone-In Beef Rib Roast

\$14⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 4 STEAKS
LIMIT 1 OFFER*

Price without coupon: \$19.99/ea

Berkot's **AMERICAN WAGYU** New York Strip Steaks- 10 oz

END THE YEAR WITH AMAZING SAVINGS ON GROCERY FAVORITES

Backyard Farms Salads- 4 oz Spring Mix or Kentucky Bold 99¢ ea LIMIT 4 PACKAGES LIMIT 1 OFFER* Price without coupon: \$1.99 WHILE SUPPLIES LAST	Creamy Avocados 99¢ ea LIMIT 10 AVOCADOS LIMIT 1 OFFER* Price without coupon: \$1.99	Driscoll's Raspberries 6 oz 99¢ ea LIMIT 4 PACKAGES LIMIT 1 OFFER* Price without coupon: \$1.99	Clementines 3 lb bag \$2⁹⁹ ea LIMIT 2 PACKAGES LIMIT 1 OFFER* Price without coupon: \$5.99
Broccoli Crowns 99¢ lb LIMIT 10 LBS IN SINGLE TRANSACTION Price without coupon: \$1.99/lb	Crisp California Head Lettuce 99¢ ea LIMIT 4 HEADS LIMIT 1 OFFER* Price without coupon: \$2.49	California Oranges 3 lb bag \$1⁹⁹ ea LIMIT 4 PACKAGES LIMIT 1 OFFER* Price without coupon: \$4.99	Blueberries Full Pint \$1⁹⁹ ea LIMIT 4 PACKAGES LIMIT 1 OFFER* Price without coupon: \$3.99

\$9⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 2 PACKAGES
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$14.99

\$10⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 2 24-PACKS
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$13.99

2/\$5

LIMIT 1 PACKAGE
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$4.89

\$2⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 2 PACKAGES
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$4.99

\$1⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 2 BAGS
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$1.99

\$1⁴⁹

ea

LIMIT 1 PACKAGE
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$2.49

\$1⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 1 PACKAGE
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$2.99

2 FOR \$4

\$4⁹⁹

EACH

BUY 1 GET 1 FREE

BUY 1 GET 1 FREE

\$3⁴⁹

ea

WHEN BUYING 2
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$7.99

4 FOR \$12

when buying 4

\$2⁹⁹

ea

WHEN BUYING 2
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$3.49

\$1⁴⁹

ea

LIMIT 4 BOTTLES
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$2.79

99¢

ea

LIMIT 4 BOTTLES
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$2.49

\$1⁴⁹

ea

LIMIT 4 BOTTLES
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$2.79

\$4⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 2 PACKAGES
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$7.99

\$4⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 4 PIZZAS
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$7.99

\$2⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 2 24-PACKS
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$3.99

\$2⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 2 PACKAGES
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$3.99

\$14⁹⁹

ea

WITH INSTANT SAVINGS

\$14⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 2 24-PACKS PER BRAND FAMILY
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$19.99/ea

\$14⁹⁹

ea

LIMIT 2 24-PACKS PER BRAND FAMILY
LIMIT 1 OFFER*
Price without coupon: \$19.99/ea

*Sale valid only when buying 2 per brand family. Cannot combine brands.

Berkot's Seafood Savings SUPER SALE

Jumbo Warm Water Lobster Tails- 10-12 oz

\$19⁹⁹

EACH

Warm Water, Personal-Size Lobster Tails- 2 oz (Sold in 5 pk for \$9.95)

\$1⁹⁹

EACH

Jumbo Premium Scallops

\$10⁹⁹

PER LB

Fresh Atlantic Salmon Whole Fillets

2-3 lb Avg. (Smaller fillets- \$9.99/lb)

\$7⁹⁹

PER LB

Censea Cooked Large Shrimp

31-40 ct (Sold in a 1 lb bag)

\$7⁹⁹

EACH

Best Choice Chili or Cocktail Sauce- 12 oz

\$2⁹⁹

EACH

Censea Half Moon Shrimp Ring- 16 oz

\$9⁹⁹

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OBITUARIES

Betty Ann Aylward

COAL CITY— Betty Ann Aylward, 74, of Coal City, and formerly of Oak Lawn, IL passed away on Thursday, Dec. 19, 2024, at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

Born on Aug. 13, 1950, in Streator, IL, Betty Ann was the daughter of Carl and Anna (Kovach) Webber. She was raised in Carpentersville, IL, and graduated from Barrington High School with the Class of 1968. After high school, Betty worked for Time Life in Chicago before dedicating herself to her home and raising her family. She later went on to own and operate Elite Secretarial Service in Evergreen Park, IL.

Betty Ann was a member of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Parish in Coal City. She enjoyed traveling and cherished visits to the casinos, where she found joy in the simple pleasures of life. Above all, Betty was a loving wife and devoted mother who will be remembered for her kindness, generosity, and sense of humor. Her selfless nature meant she always put others before herself, and she had an innate ability to bring joy to those around her.

Family was Betty's greatest priority, and she held her grandchildren close to her heart. She leaves behind a legacy of love, compassion, and a deep commitment to her family.

Survivors include her husband, Bruce M. Aylward, whom she married June 20, 1998; two children: John Bates of Phoenix, AZ and Eileen (Matt) Ahmann of



Channahon, IL; two granddaughters: Isabella and Grace; one grandson, Damian; four brothers: Carl (Nancy) Webber of Cave Creek, AZ, Richard (the late Bettie) Webber of Matteson, IL, Robert (Pat) Webber of Winthrop Harbor, IL and Fred (Melodie) Webber of Dundee, IL; her mother-in-law, Jane Aylward and one brother-in-law, William Aylward, both of Posen, IL and numerous nieces and nephews, as well as her cherished canine companion, May May.

Betty was preceded in death by her parents, and her father-in-law, William Aylward.

Funeral services were Monday morning, Dec. 23, 2024 at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, 600 East Jackson Street in Morris. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated with Reverend Jason Stone presiding and Deacon Paul Jung assisting.

Burial was in Mount Carmel Catholic Cemetery in Morris.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Betty's memory to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

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

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

Charlotte Finn

SOUTH WILMINGTON— Charlotte Terese Finn, 92, of South Wilmington, passed away on Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2024 peacefully at her home. Born on July 30, 1932 in Morris, to Martin and Alice (nee Harney) Eich.

She was an Administrative Assistant for Reed-Custer School District as well as South Wilmington Grade School and Elwood Elementary School. After retirement she volunteered at Morris Hospital. She was a member of the Council of Catholic Women at St. Lawrence Church and a member of the PTO when her children were young. In her later years she also enjoyed many of her grandkid's sporting events. She played the piano and organ for the church for many years and also gave piano lessons to many area youth. Charlotte loved to travel, visiting Ireland and numerous countries in Europe. She enjoyed catering meals for many events. An accomplished seamstress, she loved to make clothes for her granddaughters and always had the latest and greatest embroidery machine. More than anything Charlotte was a devoted mother, grandmother and great-grandmother who will be dearly missed.

Surviving are her sons: Matthew (Tami) Finn and Mark (Rebecca) Finn both of South Wilmington; grandchildren: Brian (Kelsey) Finn of Towson, MD; Michael



Finn of Morris; Mallory (Mitch) Sistik of South Wilmington and Lauren Finn of Bonita Springs, FL; great-grandchildren: Karson, Jaedyn and Mikey Finn and Layla and Grady Sistik; former husband Edward Finn of South Wilmington; dear cousin, Phillipa O'Keefe and numerous dear nieces and nephews.

Preceding her in death were her parents, Martin and Alice Eich; brothers: Wendell "Bud" (Betty) Eich and William Eich.

Visitation was held at the R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory on Sunday, Dec. 22, 2024. Family and friends will meet at St. Lawrence Catholic Church in South Wilmington on Monday, Dec. 23, 2024 at 10:00 am for a Mass of Christian Burial. Father Stanley Drewniak will officiate. Interment will immediately follow at Mount Carmel Cemetery in Morris. In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be directed to South Wilmington Grade School for the music and art programs. For more information and to visit her online guestbook, please log on to www.rwpattersonfuneralhomes.com or find us on Facebook.

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

Braceville-Gardner Cemetery donations

The following donations to the Braceville-Gardner Cemetery are gratefully acknowledged by the Braceville-Gardner Cemetery Association.

In memory of John and Elizabeth, Nell, Gary Jr. Lissy, by Gary Lissy Sr.

In memory of James Payton and Lorraine Hansen, by Kathy and Ray Lissy.

In memory of Matthew Vignocchi, by Mark Small.

In memory of James Payton, by Bonnie and Lane.

In memory of Patricia L. Scubic, by Dale and Pat Scubic Family.

In memory of Edward Novy, by Annamae Novy.

In memory of Lorraine Hansen, by Brian Hansen Family.

In memory of Wilson and Cullick Family, by Mr. and Mrs. John Cullick.

In memory of Nels Olson Family, by Alan Olson.

In memory of Junior W. Zilm and Nancy Coclosure, by John and Lisa Zilm.

In memory of Allison Family, by Scott and Lynn Allison.

In memory of Wallace and Mudd Family, by John and Linda Mudd.

In memory of Albrecht, Crawford, Wills and Farmer Families, by James and Louann Albrecht.

In memory of Herman and Mary Cullick, by Bernie and Debra Burla.

In memory of Junior W. Zilm, by Bettie Zilm.

In memory of Thomas, Sara and Amanda Powell,

by Pamela Hume.

In memory of Mae Pogliano, John Tira and Edward Nowman, by Ray and Kathy Lissy.

In memory of McLuckies, by David McLuckie.

In memory of Corbin and Bell's, by Rich Corbin.

In memory of Gordie Allison and Jim and Mabel Morris, by Wayne and Joyce Morris.

The association appreciates all donations during these trying economic times.

All correspondence should be mailed to Braceville Gardner Cemetery, P.O. Box 246, Braceville, IL 60407.

Board of Directors Braceville-Gardner Cemetery Association

Donald Tulley



WILMINGTON— Donald Edmund Tulley, 92 of Wilmington, passed away on Friday, Dec. 20, 2024, five days before his 93rd birthday.

Born on Dec. 25, 1931, Donald Edmund was a son of Edmund and Florence (nee Scott) Tulley. He was born on the family farm located off Chicago Road in Florence Township, which would soon become the Joliet Arsenal in support of the World War II effort. Don's family relocated for a short time to Symerton, before moving to another family farm on Warriner-Bridge Road in Wilton Township where he was raised. Losing his father at age nine, Don continued to attend school in the one room schoolhouse with the rest of the farm kids. He attended Peotone High School, then started his lifelong love of farming with his brothers Joe and Harold. Don took a short timeout from farming and honorably served in the United States Navy as a Radioman 2 from 1950 to 1954 during the Korean War, and he was "able to see the world." Don would share countless stories of his schoolhouse days and the daily antics. He spoke fondly of the US Navy, shared many stories with his family, and kept in touch with several of his Navy buddies throughout the years.

On Sept. 24, 1955, Don married the love of his life, Joan Haley. They were married in St. Patrick's Church of the 12-mile Grove in Wilton Center. They were blessed with 69 years of marriage and four children. Together, Don and Joan built a successful corn, soybean, and wheat farm business in Florence and Wilton Townships. Over the years, they also raised hogs, cattle, ducks, turkeys, and chickens. Don always had his faithful furry companions by his side, most notably Oscar and Bear, and they spent countless hours with him in the combine, tractor, grain truck, and pickup.

Don had a strong work ethic. He spent over 30 years working for HP Graham Road Construction in the summers. Don operated the grader and chipper and formed lifelong friendships with Pat Graham and his crew. During the winters, he lent his math and organizational skills to Matt and Barb Hickey and assisted them in preparing income tax returns for multiple farmers in the area. In his earlier days, Don used his woodworking skills and spent the winters building cabinets at Tri-Star Cabinets in New Lenox or Brakur Custom Cabinetry in Shorewood. He also found time to be a Florence Township Trustee, served on various boards at St. Patrick's Church, and was the go-to handy man for his children, mom, aunts and uncles. When the snowy weather hit, Don would spend many hours



operating the V-plow for Florence Township and opening the snowed-in roads for everyone.

Don retired from farming in 1998, moved into town, and began volunteering at Kuzma Care Cottage. He looked forward to his Saturday mornings sorting food, but most importantly, having coffee and donuts with the men. He frequented the Wilmington Library and read countless books. He kept his lawn in perfect condition and would say "it's not hard farming only 1/4 of an acre!"

Don loved everything about life. He loved his wife, his children, his Irish heritage, being Catholic, and being an American. He was a teacher and mentor to his children, and he will be greatly missed.

Survived by his loving wife of 69 years, Joan (nee Haley); loving devoted children: Sharon Prusank, Donna (Robert) Ball, and Stephen (Vanessa) Tulley; 12 grandchildren: Breannen (Ross) Marshall, Melissa (Daniel) Christmann, Erin (Brian) Dowling, Megan (Orlando) Diaz, Matthew (Stacey) Saulters, Garrett (Ashley) Saulters, Kiara Saulters, Rachelle (Wes) DeMoney, Dr. Stephen Tulley (fiancé – Liz Lowe), Kyle Tulley, Katelyn (Tony) Sinchak and Anna Tulley (fiancé – Gerald Marrero), and 15 great-grandchildren, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Don was preceded in death by his parents Edmund Tulley and Florence Carey; daughter, Jacqueline; brothers Joseph (Barbara); Harold (Loretta), Stephen (Susan), and sister: Helen (Roy) Koller.

Visitation will be held at the Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 East Kahler Road in Wilmington on Friday, Dec. 27, 2024, between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Funeral services will follow Saturday, Dec. 28, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. in St. Patrick Catholic Church, Wilton Center. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated with Reverend Sebastian Gargol presiding and Deacon Jay Plese assisting. Burial will be in Mount Saint Patrick Cemetery in Wilton Center.

Pallbearers will be Stephen Tulley, Kyle Tulley, Matt Saulters, Garrett Saulters, Ross Marshall, and Dan Christmann.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Don's memory to St. Rose Catholic Church in Wilmington or St. Patrick Catholic Church in Wilton Center.

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

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

Local churches offering meals or pickup free food at pantries

CLA Food Pantry. Christian Life Assembly, 2960 E Division St Diamond IL. 815-578-5441. Available Tuesday 9:00-2:30 am and Friday 3:30 to 6 p.m.

Braidwood Food Pantry at Community Care Center. Open Tuesdays 8 to 11:45 a.m. 112 S. Center Street, Braidwood. Information: 815-325-0779

Ignite Christian Church, 1180 W 1st St. Braidwood. Micro-pantry open 24 hours front of church Info: (815)-390-5040

Top Fuel Saloon Food Pantry. Open Fridays from 3 to 4 p.m. 275 S. Hickory St., Braidwood.

Secret Pantry, for hours and location see: The Original Secret Pantry Facebook page

Coal City Food Pantry at Coal City United Methodist Church. (Use south entrance) Closed all federal holidays. Open Mondays 9-11 a.m. and Thursdays 1-3 p.m. 6805 E. McArdle Road, Coal City. Information: 815-216-3288. We Care of Grundy

County Food Pantry. Office Hours: Mon.-Wed. and Fri.: 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1:00-4:00 p.m. Pantry Hours: Monday-Friday 1:00-3:00 by appointment. Please call to schedule your time to come 815-942-6389. 530 Bedford Rd., Morris. Information: 815-942-6389

Kuzma Care Cottage, food pantry. 635 S. Main Street, Wilmington. Hours: M-F 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. and the 2nd Saturday of each month, 8-11 a.m. 815-476-2030

Local Meals:

St. Vincent Table hot meals are offered at various locations throughout the year. Here are the months and locations for 2025. Hours for pick-up for shut ins 4-4:30 p.m. Eat in start 4:30 until 5:30 p.m.

Dec. 2024 and January-February 2025: CC First Baptist Church, 4470 E Rt 113 Mazon.

March-April 2025: Assumption of the BVM, 180 S Kankakee St., Coal City.

May-July 2025: New Hope Presbyterian Church, 80 N. Garfield St Coal City.

Aug.-Oct. 2025: Immaculate Conception Church, 110 S School St Braidwood.

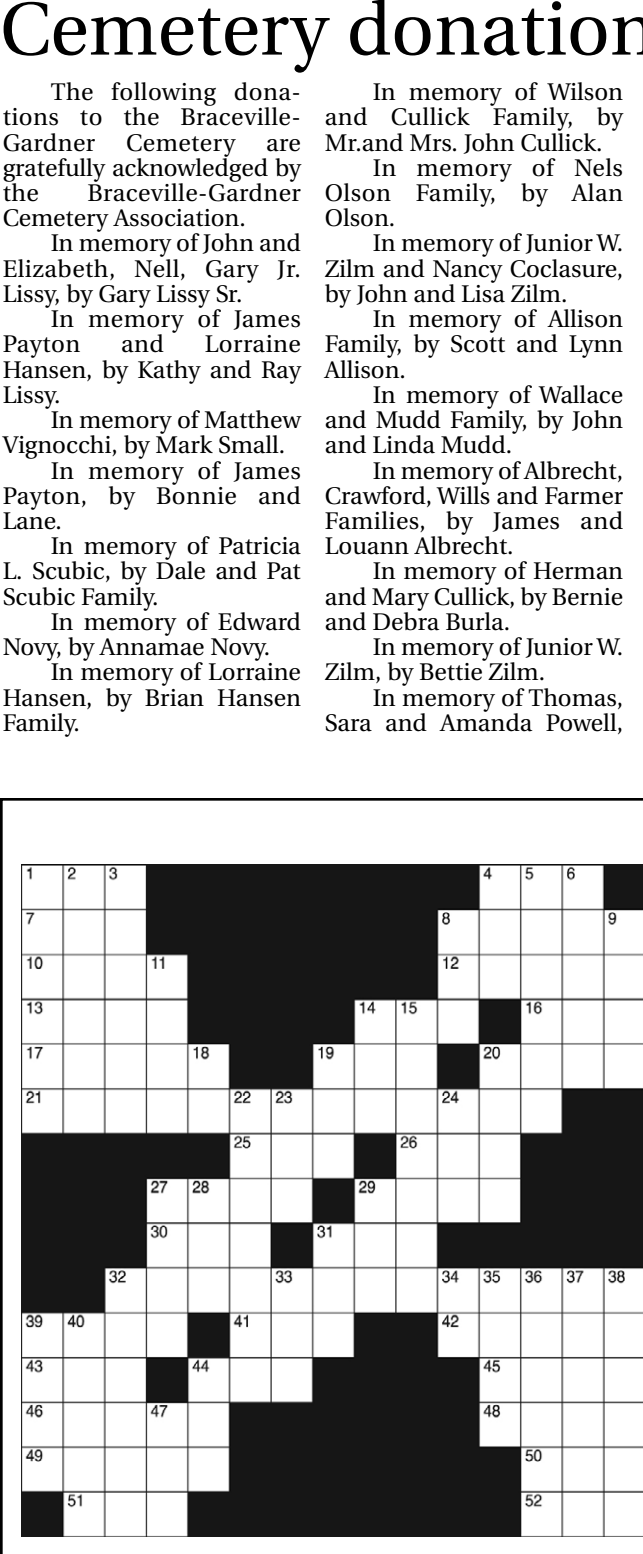
Nov. 2025: Assumption of the BVM, 180 S Kankakee St Coal City.

December 2025: CC First Baptist Church, 4470 E Rt 113 Mazon.

A coffee mug clears the driveway

With a few light flurries behind us and a possible mild winter on the horizon, WillCountyGreen.com wants everyone to understand how to salt driveways and walking areas without harming fish and wildlife.

Salt will wash across lawns and into storm drains. Keep in mind that a coffee mug (12 ounces) is enough to clear 500 sq ft. Once temps drop below 15 degrees Fahrenheit, salt becomes ineffective and can harm wildlife.

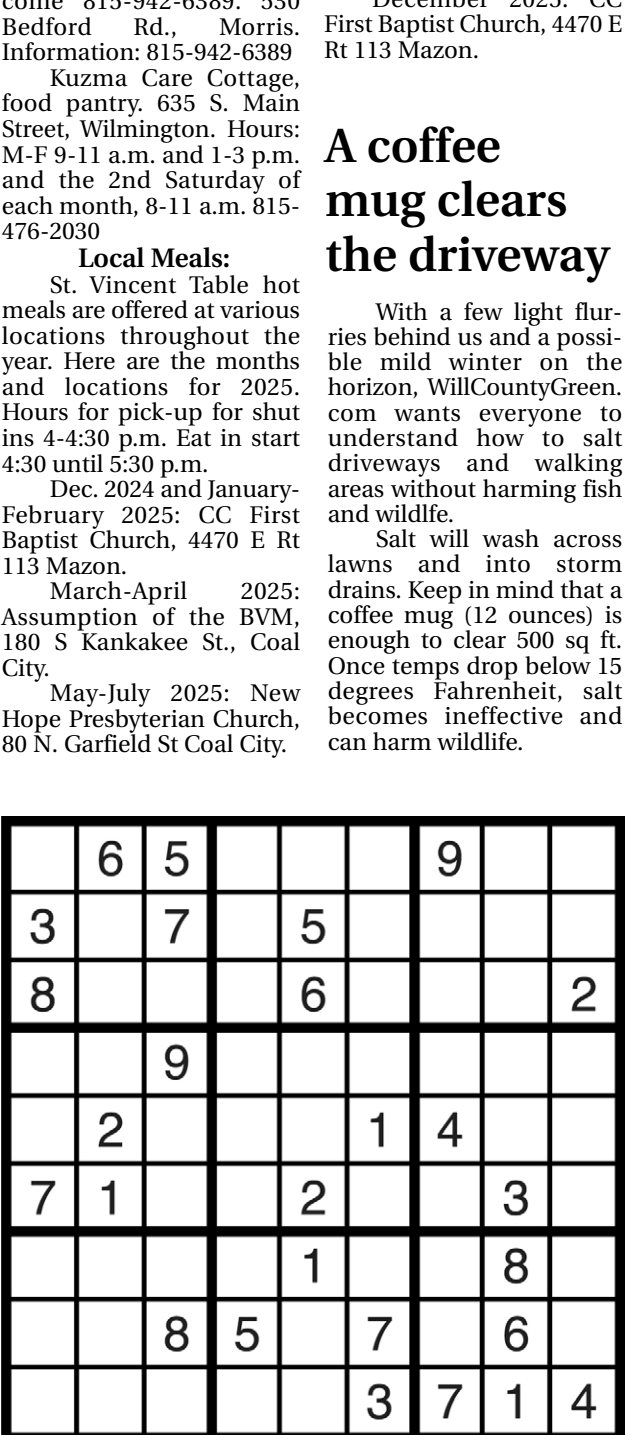


CLUES ACROSS

- Central processing unit
- Taxi
- Body part
- Papal court
- Young women making their public debuts
- Metal shackles
- Joseph's wife
- Licensed professional
- Partner to cheese
- Mild fruits
- File format
- Province of Indonesia
- Beloved grilled foods
- Bar bill
- Don't know when yet
- Whale ship captain
- Touches softly
- Mock
- Red-brown Pacific sea bream
- Summer entertainment options
- Protective crust
- Cool!
- Behave in a way that belittles
- Denial
- A place to sleep
- Electronic counter-countermeasures
- Intestinal pouches
- SE Asia family of languages
- Sound
- Select
- Give the impression of dishonesty
- Witness

CLUES DOWN

- Of cadmium
- Deliver a sermon
- Inner regions of a shadow
- Aggressive dog
- Smells
- Twofold
- Former OSS
- Computer language
- Indian groom
- Automobile
- Hairstyle
- Atomic #76
- Guy (slang)
- Ladies' undergarments
- Furniture with open shelves
- Back-arc basin
- Partner to flow
- A type of horse
- Possesses
- Split pulses
- Small amount
- Flat-bottomed riverboat
- Not good
- Atomic #31
- Assist in committing a crime
- Chauvinists
- Get away
- One of a people who speaks a Semitic language
- Civil rights college organization
- Combustible dark rocks
- Grocery container
- Central nervous system



SUDOKU - Here's how it works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle.



Share-A-Shot with the Giant

TWO-YEAR-OLD Hagen Crater, grandson of Kurt Crater, hangs out with the Gemini Giant at the concession stand, enjoying a cup of hot chocolate and marshmallows on the North Island park Christmas light walk. The Craters were grateful for the Wilmington Lions Club volunteers who turn the park into a Winter wonderland with thousands of lights and hundreds of Christmas decorations. Kurt said little Hagen had a blast and thought it was great to meet the Gemini Giant (costume worn by volunteer Mike Kelly). The Christmas display lights up 6-9 p.m. nightly through Jan. 1. If you'd like to submit a Share-A-Shot photo of something of local interest email it to news@fpnusa.com.

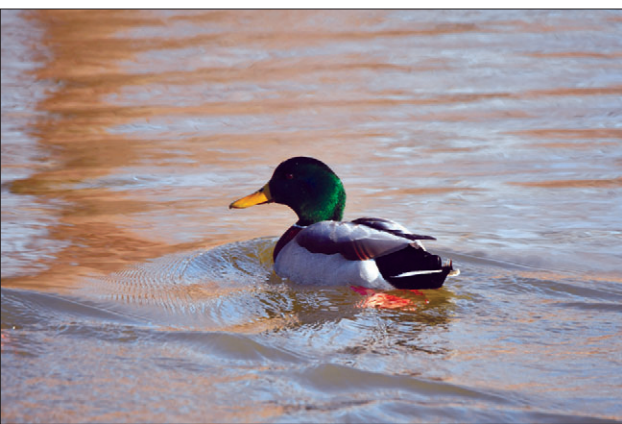
Come enjoy a bowl of homemade soup

Coal City United Methodist Church, 6805 McArdle Rd., Coal City, invites the community to join them for a Soup Supper on Saturday, Jan. 4, from 4 p.m. to 6:30 pm.

They will serve their delicious homemade vegetable beef and chicken & rice soups. Each meal includes your choice of

soup, a sandwich, crackers, a beverage, ice cream & dessert.

Carry-outs will be available. The cost is \$15 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.



Courtesy photo by Forest Preserve

Look for creatures that feature special adaptations to survive the cold months during a Winter Waterfowl hike 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 12 at the Forest Preserve District of Will County's Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon. Join a naturalist and fellow birders on the chilly trails at Four Rivers. Free, all ages. Register by Jan. 10. under the Event Calendar at ReconnectWithNature.org.

Wellness workshop offered

The Forest Preserve District of Will County will be offering a Wellness Workshop - Access to the Outdoors: 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 7, at the Sugar Creek Administration Center, off Laraway Road in Joliet.

January's workshop in this series will feature presentations by staff on the benefits of the Forest Preserve's work to protect and enhance natural and cultural resources. Free, all ages. Register by Jan. 7.

Online registration is available on the Event Calendar at ReconnectWithNature.org.

PUBLIC NOTICES
Because it's
your right
to know

Imagination Library coming to Will County

Will County is partnering with The Dollywood Foundation to bring Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to Will County.

The partnership kicks off a county-wide fundraising campaign to fully launch the book-gifting program in Will County, which mails free, high-quality and age-appropriate books to children from birth to age five.

Since launching in 1995, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has become the preeminent early childhood book-gifting program in the world. The flagship program of The Dollywood Foundation has gifted over 250 million free books in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, and The Republic of Ireland.

"The power of books is undeniable," said County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant. "The earlier we get them into our children's hands the more opportunities we provide for our earliest learners. We have a unique opportunity, with the help of the State of Illinois, to develop emergent readers and create a foundation for the love of books."

The Imagination Library of Will County is supported by the statewide expansion of the program launched by Governor JB Pritzker in December 2023.

The state program matches every dollar raised locally, improving the ability of county-wide programs to raise funds and register children. With the state match, every \$16 raised locally will sponsor one child to receive a full year of high-quality, age-appropriate books.

Research has shown that the first five years of life are critical for young children, with around 90% of brain development occurring during those years. Daily readings by parents or caregivers provide the greatest opportunity to prepare their child for school, and literacy is a long-term major social determinant of health and economic impact.

Children receiving books through the Imagination Library see increased readiness for kindergarten and higher academic achievement.

To fully launch the program and begin registering local children, a fundraising goal of \$150,000 has been established to sustain operations for the first two years.

In partnership with the Rialto Square Theatre, a kick-off fundraising event will be held on Jan. 30 in celebration of Imagination Library and Dolly Parton's January birthday. The "Imagination Celebration - A Dolly Parton Birthday Book Bash" will feature a celebratory reception and a showing of the 1980 classic "9 to 5", starring Dolly Parton.

All proceeds from the event will support the Imagination Library of Will County. The reception will begin at 5:30 p.m. on Jan. 30 at the Rialto Square Theatre in Joliet, with the movie starting at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$20 and available for purchase at the Rialto Box Office (102 N. Chicago Street, Joliet, IL

- Mon.-Fri. - 12 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.).

To donate directly to the Imagination Library of Will County, including sponsoring a child to receive one year of free books for \$16, visit <https://willcountyimaginationlibrary.org>.

Lisa Marie's
HAIR SALON

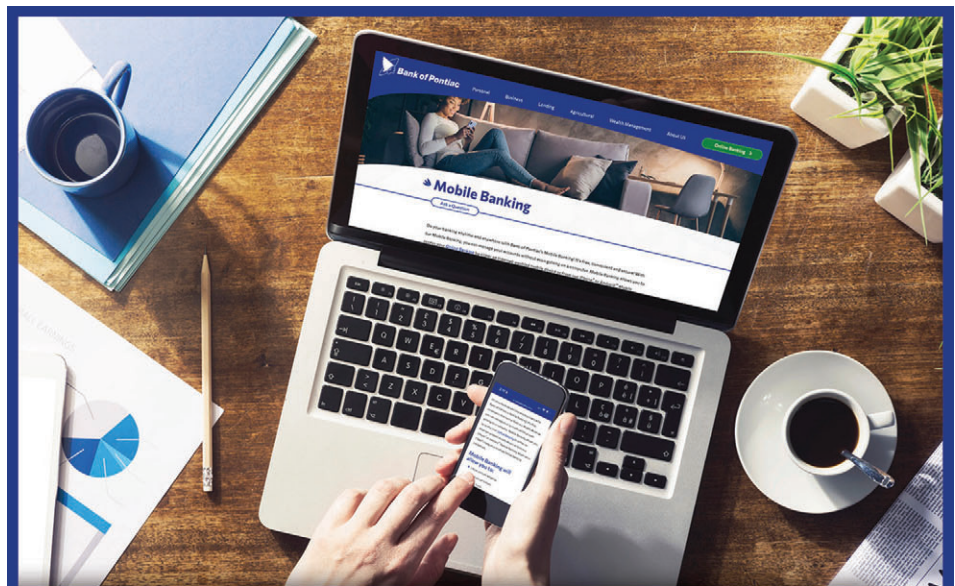
- Men
- Women
- Children

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 Ketel One Vodka All Flavors \$200 OFF 750ml \$300 OFF 1.75L	 Josh Wine All Flavors \$200 OFF 750 ml
 LIL VEGAS 6 Machines Private Room COME TRY YOUR LUCK! Must be 21 yrs or Older	 Jim Beam Bourbon All Flavors \$200 OFF 750ml \$300 OFF 1.75L

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End of Year Clearance

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50% OFF CHRISTMAS MERCHANDISE
*EXCLUDES CRAFTER #C24 MARKED TAGS

FABRIC DEPARTMENT SALE DEC 30, 31 & JAN 1
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20% OFF ALL FABRIC ON THE BOLT (MIN 1YD CUTS)
20% OFF SELECT KITS
20% OFF SELECT NOTIONS

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1540 N Division St
Braidwood, IL
815-458-2191
Located at I55 & Rt 113, exit 236, East Frontage Road

www.countrysidevillagegifts.com

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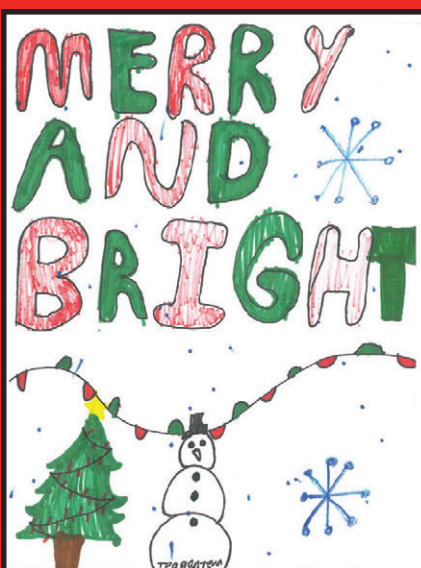
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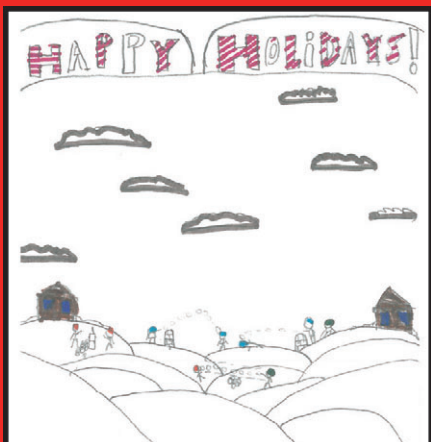
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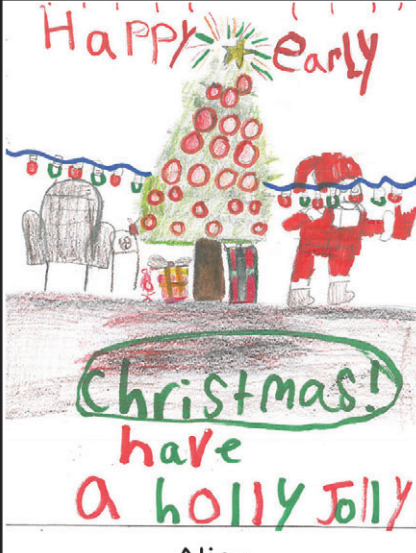
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COMET SPORTS



Photo by Eric Fisher

FOR A FOOTHOLD—Wrestling at 165 pounds for Reed-Custer during a recent home victory is Reed Newbrough.



Photo by Eric Fisher

ALMOST THERE—Reed-Custer's Kaaden Wood works to get a pin at 120 pounds.

Comet grapplers rack up victories

It was a good week for the Reed-Custer wrestling team as they continue to rack up the victories and remain undefeated. The Comets took on four opponents, defeating all. It proved as a nice tune-up as the Comets prepare for the Abe Lincoln Rumble dual team tournament in Springfield Dec. 27-28.

Reed-Custer 38, Gibson City (Melvin-Sibley) 33
 113-Cole Harris (RC) over Charity Miguel fall 0:29
 120-Kaaden Wood (RC) over C. Brucker (GC) MD 13-2
 126-Gage Martin (GC) over Jayden Sanchez dec 13-12
 132-Landen Lage (GC) over Tanner Gullquist TF 16-0
 138-Jeremy Eggleston (RC) over N. Lowe (GC) MD 14-4
 144-Ethan Lowe (GC) over Maxymilian Lichaj fall 1:14
 150-Hudson Babb (GC) over Kolsyn Payne fall 1:13
 157-Corbin Ragle (GC) over Brock Billingsley fall 3:08
 165-Cooper Miller (GC) over Reed Newbrough MD 20-7
 175-Nathan Vogler (RC) over Steven Morris fall 1:17
 190-Aiden Shultz (RC) over Kaden Brucker fall 1:52
 215-Dominic Alaimo (RC) over Cohen Kean fall 5:53
 285-Carson Sexton (GC) over Christian Mounts dec 2-0
 106-Colton Drinkwine (RC) over J. Swidergal fall 0:51

Reed-Custer 57, Clifton (Central) 24
 106-Colton Drinkwine (RC) by forfeit
 113-Cole Harris (RC) over Matthew Salas fall 2:24
 120-Kaaden Wood (RC) over Beau Williams fall 1:22
 126-Jayden Sanchez (RC) over Owen Robinson fall 5:14
 132-Tanner Gullquist (RC) by forfeit
 138-Jeremy Eggleston (RC) over John Randles fall 2:22
 144-Evan Cox (C) over Maxymilian Lichaj fall 1:35
 150-Giona Panozzo (C) over Kolsyn Payne fall 1:30
 157-Gianni Panozzo (C) over Brock Billingsley fall 1:36
 165-Reed Newbrough (RC) over Grant Frisbee fall 0:12
 175-Aiden Shultz (RC) over Cooper Moyer fall 1:50
 190-Nathan Vogler (RC) over Julian Martinez fall 2:10
 215-Dominic Alaimo (RC) over Brody O' Connor dec 1-0
 285-Josh McCurry (C) over Christian Mounts fall 3:28

Reed-Custer 44, Seneca 36
 106-Colton Drinkwine (RC) over Logan Kubat fall
 113-Cole Harris (RC) over Chris Thompson TF 16-1
 120-Raiden Terry (S) over Kaaden Wood dec 5-1
 126-Jayden Sanchez (RC) over Wyatt Coop fall
 132-Ryker Terry (S) over Nathan Kuntz fall
 138-Avery Phillips (S) over Tanner Gullquist fall
 144-Jeremy Eggleston (RC) over Devon Daemicke fall
 150-Ryan Flynn (S) over Maxymilian Lichaj TF 15-0
 157-Gunner Varland (S) over Brock Billingsley fall
 165-Reed Newbrough (RC) over Nick Grant fall
 175-Nathan Vogler (RC) over Alex Gagnon fall
 190-Landen Venecia (S) over Aiden Shultz MD 13-4
 215-Dominic Alaimo (RC) over Colton Angeloff fall
 285-Jeremy Gagnon (S) over Christian Mounts fall

Reed-Custer 51, Ottawa (Marquette) 27
 106-Colton Drinkwine (RC) over Logan Leskanich fall
 113-Cole Harris (RC) over Shea Conner fall
 120-Kaaden Wood (RC) over Koby Clark dec 11-6
 126-Jayden Sanchez (RC) by forfeit
 132-Nathan Kuntz (RC) by forfeit
 138-Tanner Gullquist (RC) by forfeit
 144-Jeremy Eggleston (RC) over Beau Thompson fall
 150-Brysen Manly (M) over Maxymilian Lichaj fall
 157-Nolan DeMink (M) over Brock Billingsley dec 15-11
 165-Reily Leifheit (M) over Reed Newbrough fall
 175-Landyn Mcemery (M) over Nathan Vogler fall
 190-Aiden Shultz (RC) by forfeit
 215-Dominic Alaimo (RC) over Alex Schaefer fall
 285-Adrian Schaefer (M) over Christian Mounts fall

Comets snap streak with a win over G-SW

The Reed-Custer varsity boys snapped a seven-game losing streak last week by defeating Gardner-South Wilmington 67-39.

The Comets came out shooting, building a 24-10 lead in the opening frame and were up 38-17 by half-time.

Comet center Jacob Reardon crashed the boards for 17 rebounds, turning many into second-chance points as he led all scorers with 24 points.

Matt Kuban had an impressive game with 18 points including 4-for-8 from three-point range. Dom Eddy chipped in with nine points while Collin Monroe and Alex Bielfeldt

scored four points each. Kaiden Klein and Jesse Tresouthick tallied three points each.

On Friday the Comets fell to Peotone 54-42 after the Blue Devils went on a 19-8 run in the third quarter after RCHS was up 29-28 at the break.

Last Tuesday at home Herscher rallied in the second half to defeat the Comets 57-48.

The Comets are 2-9 overall, 0-5 in the conference. They will play in the Seneca Holiday Tournament Dec. 26-28

JV Comets

The frosh-soph Comets have won three in a

row, defeating Herscher 39-36, and Manteno 47-42.

The JV Comets got past the visiting Tigers who had a chance at a three-point shot in the end but missed.

Jesse Tresouthick led RCHS with 13 points, five rebounds and four steals, while Ethan Segoviano stepped up with 11 points.

Chase Issac tallied seven points while Alex Fierro scored five and Orion Bergman three.

During the win over Manteno, Tresouthick finished with 16 points and five rebounds. Kaiden Klein hustled in 14 points, Issac scored 13, Bergman had three and Fierro one.



Photo by Eric Fisher

REED-CUSTER SENIOR Jacob Reardon works the baseline while taking the ball to the basket. He is averaging 18 points per game.

Varsity Panthers suffer two losses

The Reed-Custer 8th grade Panthers lost to Beecher last week 37-26.

The Panthers were led by Corbin Stahl with 11 points. Sam Crotty and Dillan Lobb added 5 points each while battling down low all night. Axel Garcia-Diaz and Dylan Leonard also added a bucket each.

The Panthers also lost to Coal City 50-31. The Panthers battled hard against a good Coalers team. The Panthers were led by Corbin Stahl with 12 points and Sam Crotty and Axel Garcia Diaz scored 5 points each.

Other contributors were Thomas Ghesquire with 3, Caden Atwell, Logan Baumgartner and Dillon Lobb with 2.

Wollenzien scores 18 to upend Peotone

Reed-Custer sophomore Alyssa Wollenzien wasn't afraid to shoot the ball Saturday against the Peotone Blue Devils as she led the varsity squad with 18 points during a 42-37 victory.

Wollenzien helped her team jump to a 15-4 first quarter lead before the Blue Devils narrowed to gap to 24-19 by half-time.

The Lady Comets were able to hang on in the end as the two teams matched each other in points in the second half.

The victory improves the Lady Comets to 6-6 overall, 2-3 in the conference.

Stewart chipped in with three points and five rebounds.

Reed-Custer lost to Somonauk on Thursday in a heart-breaking 40-38 defeat.

The hosting Bobcats came back from a 30-23 deficit to start the fourth quarter by going on a 17-8 run to steal the win.

Stewart led RCHS with nine points. Cameron Wallace and Wollenzien chipped in with eight points each. Stepping up for five points was Grace while Toler and Liebermann tallied four points each.

The Lady Comets will compete in the Peotone Holiday Tournament Dec. 26-28, taking on Bradley-Bourbonnais at 10 a.m. Thursday.

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