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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2025

A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER • (815) 634-0315

Berkot's Super Foods requests video gaming

BY MIKE LOOMIS CORRESPONDENT

Shoppers in Coal City may soon be able to add gambling to their grocery lists. Berkot's Super Foods has unveiled plans to install video gaming machines in their store at 100 South Broadway Street.

Updating the Coal City Village Board of Trustees about Berkot's plans at their Jan. 22 meeting, Village Administrator Matt Fritz said that the grocery store chain views adding slot machines as way of paying for building maintenance and meeting other expenses in the competitive supermarket industry.

"They're trying to add the gaming function to their grocery store here in Coal City," Fritz said, noting that the Berkot's location in Dwight already features gaming machines for their customers.

The machines would be installed near the front of the store near the service desk and would not be accessible to those under 21.

Berkot's representative Lucas Kotara gave a presentation earlier in the month to the Coal City Planning and Zoning Board. The store owners will need to obtain a Class A liquor license from the village in order to install the gaming machines.

The Berkot's Super Foods chain, which was founded in 1981, has 15 locations in Illinois and two in Wisconsin.

According to the Illinois Gaming Board, there are eight locations in Coal City that offer video gaming. No more than six machines are permitted at each location.

The issue will come up next for a public hearing SEE BERKOT'S PAGE 2



Photo courtesy Coal City School District

CRACKS IN THE north gym wall closed down the Coal City Intermediate School on Oct. 30. Now the Coal City Board of Education and school administrators are weighing options on whether to repair, demolish or rebuild a new school. District Unit 1 is seeking taxpayer input before making a decision.

Residents offer opinions on what to do about Coal City Intermediate School

BY ROSE PANIERI STAFF WRITER

The Jan. 22 front page story, "Repair, rebuild, or demolish? Decisions needed for Coal City Intermediate School," in the Coal City Courant brought 138 comments on the Coal City Courant Facebook page.

At a Jan. 15 town hall meeting, District Unit 1 Superintendent Chris Spencer spent almost 90 minutes explaining where the school board is in terms of what to do next, introducing four concepts for either repairing or renovating the district's oldest building, which was shut down last November due to significant structural defects.

As a review, the district is studying four options, with some preliminary estimates provided.

• Concept 1: Repair the 8,300 sq. ft. truss structure supporting the intermediate school gym. That would be cheapest option, take at least 12 months from time from decision and give the district time to decide the future of the of CCIS until after a new agreement is made with Constellation. Estimated minimum: \$4.1 million.

• Concept 2 : Demolish the two-story portion of the intermediate school (26,500 sq. ft) and renovate the remaining 45,700 sq. ft. The renovation (abate) of the undamaged portion is state mandated so the entire building would have to be brought up to code. Would take 18 months from decision while adding 50 more years of service. Estimated minimum: \$24.3 million

• Concept 3: Completely raze the school, build it new at the existing site to house

grades 4 and 5 with the planned addition of more classrooms for grades 2 and 3 in the future. Would likely take 18-24 months from decision while adding 50 more years of service. Estimated minimum: \$36 million

• Concept 4: Build a new grade 2-5 building on property the school district already owns south of the middle school. It would house grades 4-5 with planned addition for grades 2-3 when needed. Or build space for grades 2-3 now, demolish the intermediate school and lease or sell or demolish the present elementary school. Would require 18-24 months from decision. Estimated minimum: \$36 million not including new utilities, parking, entrance road and playground equipment.

No sooner did the news break than residents took to social media to offer their opinions to the school board via Facebook.

Fiscal concerns

Unsurprisingly, in these challenging economic times, a number of residents expressed concern about costs. Most who commented wanted to see the building repaired rather than demolished to save costs and maintain the historical integrity of the site.

"It would be nice to see the long-term cost benefit analysis between the two options before providing decisions," Harry Miller said. "Our nation and state have both been fiscally irresponsible and cumulative debt is not sustainable."

Brenda Wolfe agreed, stating that when a home is damaged, most people don't choose to demolish it, but to make repairs, if feasible.

"Our children and

grandchildren are going to be in debt because of some very unwise decisions that were made," she said.

Other residents, such as Kailee Wills, suggested looking into grants and other sources to fund the repair and renovation of the intermediate school.

"There are so many resources for allocating funds and grants that are not loans, taxpayer dollars, or cut into the school budget," she said.

Thirty-three individuals liked the comment, but said the building may not meet requirements for a grant for historic preservation grants.

Historical significance

The residents recognizing the historical significance of the building also chimed in.

"Keep this iconic building," Lisa Peters said. "Coal City already tore down a lot of nostalgic buildings which is sad."

A few wanted to see the intermediate school repaired and repurposed into a museum or public building.

"Repair and find a way to use as a museum and educational facility regarding mining history," Mary Farrell suggested.

Daniel Corbin brought up the era in which the school was utilized as a hospital during the Influenza Epidemic from 1917 to 1919. Others felt a sense of nostalgia, remembering the parents and grandparents attending the intermediate school.

Build a new school

In the minority were the residents who believe building a new intermediate school is the most practical, if not cost-effective, solution.

"Rebuild and prepare for growth," Amanda DuPaw Shain said.

"Tear it down or sell

it," Darrell Thomas said "I see people in this town do not like change... Students need technology and a more modern and efficient learning environment..."

Some residents were torn between nostalgia and progress.

"I have mixed feelings, I like the idea of a rebuild," Heather Banks said. "We can combine some schools and not switch every two years."

Looking to the future, Amy Seeley suggested building a new school to house grades two through five.

"Both the IS (Intermediate School) and ES (Elementary School) are too small and in horrible condition, Seeley said. "It will be less expensive in the long run to build new buildings."

The timeline

School officials believe the Intermediate School, 108 years old, was damaged during a July 16 wind storm that blew down trees, knock out power for the town and reports of a tornado on Interstate 55 near the Mobil refinery.

A crack was discovered in August on a brick wall on the north side of the gym. Structural engineers inspected it and recommended steel bracing since it was growing. The braces were added but one week later nuts were loose and the crack continued to grow.

Architects recommended the area be abandoned. By early October the north gym and surrounding classrooms, offices and restrooms were closed. Construction workers cut into the dry-wall ceiling, thankfully did not find asbestos, but did

SEE SCHOOL PAGE 2



Photo from Grundy County Sheriff's Office

EMILY JOHNSON, 34, is missing and endangered. Law enforcement is seeking the public's help in locating the mother of a three-month-old.

Missing infant recovered, mother still missing

BY ROSE PANIERI STAFF WRITER

According to the Grundy County Sheriff's Office, on Thursday, Jan. 23, at approximately 3 p.m., detectives had located a 3-month-old infant, Silas Iannarella, who had gone missing with his mother, Emily Johnson, 34, of unincorporated Morris on Wednesday, Jan. 22.

"We appreciate the assistance from the pub-

lic," the press release stated. "The child will be turned over to the father and the investigation into the incident will continue."

Since no contact has been made with Johnson, she remains as being a missing/endangered person, and detectives will continue to attempt to locate her.

Mother and child go missing

SEE MISSING PAGE 2

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CURRENT FLAG

Commentary

Let's keep the Illinois flag we've already got

BY BRAD WEISENSTEIN

Illinois is considering whether it needs a new state flag. Why? Because Gov. JB Pritzker said "it may be time we create a new one that exemplifies the values of our great state."

But when it comes to politics, some of our state's values ain't so great.

We are about to see whether the man who ruled Illinois as speaker of the Illinois House for nearly 40 years will spend several years in a federal cell for corruption. We've also seen four of 11 past governors go to the federal pen. There are 200 Illinois politicians on the Chicago Tribune's "Dishonor Roll."

Corruption and Illinois' way of doing politics also created six-figures in pension debt for promises made to government unions after their generous support of politicians. The Chicago Teachers Union put one of its own in the Chicago mayor's office. Government union hegemony is enshrined in the Illinois Constitution.

With all that to fret about, who really cares when politicians create a sweet little competition to redesign the state flag? Well, here's why you should care.

Illinoisans are currently voting online for a new state flag. A commission narrowed 5,000 submissions down to 10 new potential designs. You can vote for one of the new designs, or two historic state flag designs, or the current flag.

Please. Vote for the current flag.

That's not because the current flag is so great. It's pretty plain — much like the bulk of our state before we started filling the plains with windmills and solar farms. It was adopted in 1915 and designed by Lucy Derwent of the Rockford Daughters of the American Revolution with the state seal on a white background. Nearly 55 years passed and a Vietnam vet decided our unexciting flag needed the word "Illinois" added because his fellow soldiers had no clue what the white flag represented.

Much more imagination was used on the 10 potential flag redesigns. There's a cute butterfly, and one that looks like India's national flag, and ones that look like we're all about the U. of I. or love Chicago's six-pointed star. But you should vote for the current flag because anything else wastes our tax dollars.

Something is certainly missing from this tally, but if we only replace state flags on the 102 county courthouses, 1,300 city halls, roughly 4,000 schools and 8,700 state buildings, we are talking \$2.5 million for all those all-weather state flags to post outside the buildings. Then there are flags for meeting rooms, classrooms and others.

So, as a taxpayer who will ultimately pay for this excursion into history, symbolism and nylon, you should vote and vote every day as the commission has deemed is fair. Vote to keep what we've got, including our money.

There are plenty of things Illinois could use \$2.5 million for, especially

when our state budgets keep growing. We are at a record \$53.1 billion currently, which is \$15 billion more than when our current governor took office. Next year's budget faces a projected \$3.2 billion deficit and who-knows-what tax and fee hikes to fill it.

While \$2.5 million is nothing compared with \$53.1 billion, this flag vote is symbolic. The vote can be part of a taxpayer revolt. It can tell state politicians they are spending someone else's money. And if this mini revolution succeeds, at least they won't be spending your tax dollars on more than 14,000 new state flags.

It's a chance to truly exemplify the values of our great state and tell Illinois politicians your patience with their shenanigans, distractions and excesses is, well ... flagging.

Brad Weisenstein is the managing editor of the Illinois Policy Institute. This commentary first appeared Jan. 23 in the Chicago Tribune.

Bring your pup and a cup to Mutts and Mugs Feb. 2

The Forest Preserve District of Will County will host a Mutts and Mugs program from 1-3 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 2, at Forked Creek Preserve – Ballou Road Access in Wesley Township near Wilmington.

The free program features an afternoon of socializing with your dog and other dog owners while sipping some warm cocoa or coffee provided by staff. Bring your pup and your favorite mug.

"It's good for all of us to get out and get some fresh air and socialization, especially in the heart of these cold, gray-skied winter months," said Em Wilcher, the Forest Preserve's recreation coordinator. "I'm looking forward to seeing some of our dog park regulars along with new preserve visitors for the event."

Treats and activities will be provided for the dogs. And the Will County Emergency Management Agency will be on site with its AKC Pet Disaster Relief

trailer and materials to help educate attendees on emergency preparedness for your pets.

"Unfortunately, with the example of fires in Los Angeles County in January, we've seen how unexpected emergencies can displace beloved animals from their families," Wilcher said.

EMA staff and volunteers will be on site with to share information about the emergency response resources they have available, and to answer questions about how pet owners can prepare for the unexpected.

Additionally, staff will have a limited supply of pet emergency preparedness kits to give to participants.

The program also will feature giveaways including canine goodie bags from Pets Etc. of Plainfield.

Pick up a permit

A 2025 dog park permit is required to attend the Mutts and Mugs program. Permits, including \$5 one-day passes, will be available

for purchase on site at Forked Creek Preserve from 12:30-2:30 p.m.

You must have a valid driver's license/state ID number and current rabies tag, tag number and tag expiration date to purchase a permit.

Permits also can be purchased online or in person at a visitor center in advance. The Mutts and Mugs program is for ages 13 or older.

Registration is not required.

Attending this one-day event is a nice way to explore the dog park and possibly a new preserve.

"We're excited to host this social time for dogs and their humans, especially for our residents in Wilmington and the surrounding area,"

Wilcher said. "In the past we've hosted programs and events at other dog parks near denser population centers, and this go-around we wanted to ensure we're serving our

neighbors in more rural areas."

OBITUARIES

Margaret Van Duyne

WILMINGTON— Margaret J. Van Duyne, 92 of Wilmington, passed away peacefully on Tuesday morning, Jan. 21, 2025 at Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee. She was born June 26, 1932, in Muscatine, IA. Margaret was the eldest child of Stanley and Zelma (Funck) Southall.



Margaret spent her early years in Muscatine before moving to Wilmington with her family in 1945. After graduating as Salutatorian from Wilmington High School, she married the love of her life Vincent T. Van Duyne at St. Rose Catholic Church in Wilmington, on Aug. 12, 1950. Together, they built a life centered on love, faith, and family, creating a strong foundation for future generations.

Margaret's professional life began at the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant, where she worked as an Executive Secretary. After taking a few years off to raise her children, she found a home at Clennon Electric in Wilmington, where she dedicated over 50 years of her life.

Margaret was exceptionally supportive of the achievements by everyone she knew. Her life was filled with genuine relationships and the most exciting experiences. Throughout her lifetime, she influenced, guided, and touched so many that held her special. Margaret was a devoted member of St. Rose Catholic Church. She was dedicated to her faith and held those values dearly. She took the most immense pride in her family. Margaret's love and loyalty to her husband, children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren were unwavering. She leaves behind a legacy built on the Catholic faith, profound family lineage, enduring kindness, and exceptional cooking.

Margaret was the loving wife of (the late) Vincent T. Van Duyne. The mother of (the late) Laura Proffit, Kent (Virginia) Van Duyne, Keith (Julie) Van Duyne, Vincent "Ted" Van Duyne, and Lynnette Strong. Grandmother to nine: Matthew (Ellen) Proffit, Amanda (Brendan) Gill, Andrew (Colleen) Proffit; Brittany (James) Allen, William (fiancé - Claire) Van Duyne; Vanessa Van Duyne, Timothy Van Duyne; Anna (Curry McKinney) Strong, Ashley

(Garrett) Saulters. Great Grandmother to fifteen: Ainsley Proffit; Declan, Maeve, and Liam Gill; Everett, Adler, and Wyatt Proffit; Laura, Jane, and Vincent Allen; Ava Alvarez and Carter Rodriguez; Isaiiah McKinney; Andie and Willow Saulters.

Margaret is the sister of Barbara (the late Gary) Brieser, the late John "Burnell" (Bonnie) Southall, and Nancy (Greg) Leigh. Mother in law to the late Kelly Van Duyne.

In addition, she is survived by two sisters in laws: Shirley (the late Dennis) Van Duyne, Martina (the late Herman) Van Duyne. She is preceded in death by her mother and father in law, Peter and Gertrude Van Duyne; brothers and sisters in laws: Thomas (Marguerite) Van Duyne, Rita Hurley, Marie (Bob) Wilson, Lorraine Kunis, Richard "Dick" Van Duyne, Peter (Mary) Van Duyne, Evelyn (Don) Fisher, Marcella (Bud) Anderson, John (Geraldine) Van Duyne, Leo (Joan) Van Duyne, Bernice (Don) Alcorn and Gerald Van Duyne.

A solemn visitation will be held at St. Rose Catholic Church, 604 South Kankakee Street in Wilmington on Monday, Jan. 27, 2025 from 11:00 a.m. until time of funeral service 12:00 p.m. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated with Reverend Sebastian Gargol presiding and Deacon Jay Plese assisting. Those wishing to watch the services virtually, are welcome to join the live-stream or watch on-demand through the link available on Margaret's memorial page.

Burial will follow in Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wilmington, where Margaret will be laid to rest with her late husband Vince.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Margaret's memory to St. Rose Catholic Church.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.BaskervilleFuneral.com to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Margaret'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.

Billy H. Dunn

WILMINGTON—Billy H. Dunn, 89, of Wilmington, passed away on Jan. 24, 2025 at his home under the loving care and comfort of his family and Lightways Hospice.



Born Jan. 10, 1936 in Nashville, TN, Billy Howard was a son of T.A. and Demmie (Taylor) Dunn. Over the years, he dedicated himself to his work, retiring after 30 years of service with Kerr Glass. Billy went on to work for Dial Corporation for 8 years and then the Wilmington Post Office, where he gave 13 years of service. Billy loved the Kansas City Chiefs Football, NASCAR racing and old westerns.

Survivors include three children: James Mikel, of Braidwood; Daryl Dwayne, of Shelbyville, TN and Kimi Dunn, of Wilmington; grandchildren: Amanda Holst, of Ft. Dodge, IA and Rachel (Randall) Steverson, of Tullahoma, TN and

great-grandchildren: Macey and Benjamin, of Tullahoma; one sister-in-law, Alice Dunn, of Wheel, TN and several nieces and nephews.

Billy was preceded in death by his parents, a son, William Bryan Dunn on Jan. 24, 2008; sisters: Lila Mae Oakley, Elizabeth Prince and Carolyn Throneberry and one brother, Joe "Tim" Dunn.

Per Billy's wishes, services will be private and he will be laid to rest in the family plot in Wheel, TN at a later date.

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

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

Helen Walsh

WILMINGTON— Helen M. Walsh, 88 of Wilmington, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2025 at Three Oaks Assisted Living in Cary, IL, surrounded by her family.



She was born Oct. 8, 1936 in Joliet, to the late Matthew and Agnes Verbiscer.

Helen was a member of the Immaculate Conception Church in Braidwood, St. Rose of Lima Church in Wilmington, and the Wilmington VFW Women's Auxiliary. As a young lady she played the French horn and worked as a telephone company operator. She was an avid bowler, scoring multiple 220+ games, and enjoyed gardening, and bingo. She used her crocheting talent to make and donate afghans to Kuzma's Cottage, hats & scarves to the Rotary Club of Crystal Lake annual Coat Drive, and pet blankets for the Wisconsin Humane Society.

She was a lifelong member and Sergeant in Arms of the American Catholic Slovenian Union (KSKJ) St. Genevieve of Joliet.

Surviving are three sons, John M. (Katherine) Walsh of Sherrard, IL, William (Matt) Walsh of Manzanita, OR, and Joseph (Nicole) Walsh of Chicago Ridge, IL; two daughters, Judy (Chuck) Howard of Wilmington, and Debbie (Jim) Wiseman of Cary, IL; eight grandchildren, Amanda (Eric) Nichols, Patrick (Meghan) Walsh, Paige (Dylan) King, Ashley (Austin) Howard-Kelly, Josh Howard, Eric Wiseman, Lauren Wiseman, and Gwendolyn Walsh;

nine great grandchildren, Jacob, Lily, Dylan Monaco, Carter, Creighton, and Cooper Nichols, Eleanor Nichols, Daniel and Kate Walsh, two brothers, Robert (Jean) Verbiscer of Joliet, Matthew Verbiscer of Marietta, GA.

Helen was preceded in death by her husband John of nearly 50 years, whom she married on Oct. 28, 1961.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 East Kahler Road in Wilmington on Monday, Jan. 27, 2025 from 10:30 a.m. until time of funeral service, 12:00 p.m. Those wishing wishing to participate in the services virtually, are welcome to join the livestream or watch on-demand through the link available on Helen's memorial page.

Burial will follow in Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wilmington, where Helen will be laid to rest with her late husband.

Preferred memorials in lieu of flowers may be made as gifts in Helens memory to the KSKJ Scholarship or to Kuzma Care Cottage in Wilmington.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.BaskervilleFuneral.com to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Helen'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.

Brian W. Bolte

BRACEVILLE—Brian W. Bolte, 64, of Braceville, passed away Jan. 26, 2025 after a valiant battle with Melanoma surrounded by loved ones.



Brian was born in Joliet and raised in Shorewood. He attended Troy schools and graduated from Joliet West High School. Brian worked for many years at Rovanco Piping and recently Clearwater Paper. He was known for his big, generous, kind heart and his great sense of humor. He enjoyed golfing, riding his Harley with Punky, fishing, gardening, and spending time with family and friends.

Brian is survived by his devoted wife, Punky (Willis); children, Tyler (Christine "T-Girl") Hicks and Jamie (Christopher "Pher") Price; grandchildren: Shayelei, Nikolai, Ambrose, Stella, Baylen, Evan, and Riley; mother, Judy Bolte; mother-in-law, Jean Willis; brother, Ron (Ellen) Bolte Jr.; favorite sister, Sue (Tim) Graf; sisters-in-

law, Roxanne (Jerry) Alton, Kim Willis and Chantell "Tilly" (Mike) Berg; his beloved cats, Bert and Ernie; and many loving nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles; and many friends.

He was preceded in death by his father, Ron Bolte Sr.; brother, Jeff Bolte; father-in-law, RA Willis and brothers-in-law, Keith Willis and Kevin Willis.

As per Brian's wishes, cremation rites will be accorded and there will be no services.

The family would like to thank Dr. Hamdan and staff at Riverside Cancer Center for their compassionate care of Brian.

There will be a celebration of life at a later date.

For more information and to visit his online guestbook, please log on to www.rwpattersonfuneralhomes.com.

R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory is in charge of arrangements.

Gas prices are creeping up

Average gasoline prices in Illinois are unchanged in the last week, averaging \$3.23/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois. Prices in Illinois are 4.1 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 4.1 cents per gallon higher than a year ago.

Locally, prices have risen since last week. There is officially no station offering gas for less than \$3/g, even Mohsen in Wilmington is at \$3.0 while Wilmington's Shell is at \$3.29/g.

\$3.29/g across the board, and \$3.22/g across the board in Coal City.

Going to Morris won't save with gas from \$3.19/g at BP up to \$3.29/g at Shell. Bourbonnais is at \$3.02/g at Gulf and \$3.09/g at Gas N Wash.

"Oil prices have declined over the last week following President Trump's speech at the World Economic Forum, where he urged Saudi Arabia to lower oil prices by restoring production. The downturn in oil has caused gas prices to stabilize for the time being, with crude

now more than \$5 per barrel below where it was a couple of weeks ago," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"As we approach the February 1 deadline for potential U.S. tariffs on Canada and Mexico—key sources of crude oil imports—we'll be monitoring for any potential impact, including the possibility of retaliatory tariffs."

The cheapest gas in Illinois was \$2.84/g while the highest was \$4.49/g.

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Humanity footprint changes animals and plants to evolve differently

Dear EarthTalk: How has the huge footprint of humanity forced other animal and plant species to evolve differently than they might otherwise have without people around?

- Lois V., New York, NY
Humans have profoundly altered the planet, driving plants and animals to adapt in ways they never would have without our impact. Through activities like habitat destruction, pollution, climate change, hunting and introducing invasive species, humans have significantly accelerated evolutionary changes, transforming ecosystems in dramatic and often unpre-



dictable ways. One example is the rise of tuskless elephants. Decades of ivory poaching have created intense pressure on African elephants. In regions of heavy poaching, up to half of female elephants are now tuskless, an adaptation showing how humans can profoundly alter the genetic makeup of another animal population. Urban environments

have also become hotspots for what some researchers consider accelerated evolution. During the Industrial Revolution, peppered moths in England evolved darker colors to blend into soot-covered trees. Today, insects and city-dwelling birds are similarly adapting to human-made conditions. Pigeons have modified their eating habits to thrive on discarded food, and some mosquito species have adapted to reproduce in tiny water collections present in city environments. These alterations illustrate the adaptability of species adjusting to environments changed by

humans. Chemical resistance is another area where human influence is clear. The widespread use of pesticides and antibiotics has driven the evolution of resistant pests and bacteria. Farmers battle "superweeds" that can survive herbicides, and healthcare providers face rising concerns over antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Climate change has further expedited evolutionary shifts. Animals are altering their migration patterns and breeding seasons to adapt to warmer temperatures. Birds like the great tit in Europe are lay-

ing eggs earlier in the spring to align with the availability of insects. Similarly, marine species are moving to cooler waters. This disrupts ecosystems and fisheries. These adaptations showcase the nature's incredible resilience, despite some notable drawbacks. Rapid evolution can lead to reduced biodiversity, as species unable to adapt face extinction. Ecosystem imbalances arise as invasive species prevail, pushing out native

organisms. According to the National Wildlife Federation, human activities are driving an unprecedented rate of evolutionary change. To help, choose sustainably sourced products, reduce waste, and support conservation efforts to protect habitats and species. Advocacy for policies that address climate change and pollution is also key. *EarthTalk® a 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org.*

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Thank you

We are beyond grateful for all the support, comfort, and sympathy everyone has shown us throughout this difficult time of grief. We would especially like to thank the R.W. Patterson Funeral Home, Uplifted Care, Pastor Wyeth, and the Zion Lutheran Church Ladies Aid. Your kindness and thoughtfulness will never be forgotten.

The family of Debbie Horn

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REAL ESTATE

SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE OF 425 W Anndon Rd., Braidwood, IL 60408 (Single Family). On the 20th day of February, 2025 to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **Financial Plus Credit Union Plaintiff v. Lisa M Emery Defendant.** Case No. 24 FC 0460 in the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois. Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condo-minium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact: **Heavner Beyers and Mihlar LLC**, 111 E. Main Street, Decatur, Illinois 62523 P: 217-422-1719 F: 217-422-1754 PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. Published in the Free Press Newspapers on Wed., Jan. 29 & Feb. 5 and 12, 2025.

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Have you found a lost pet or lost a pet in Will County? Please call Will County Animal Control. We may have your pet. We want to reunite your family, 815-462-5633.

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Friends Over Fifty has an immediate need for two full-time schedulers. We help the elderly maintain their independence by providing in-home companionship and other non-medical assistance with Activities of Daily Living. This is largely an administrative position in our office with minimal care duties. Some travel may be required within Will and Grundy counties. Although office hours are 9-5, M-F, you must commit to taking responsibility for our scheduling phone on nights and weekends alternating with other office staff. Training is provided as well as PTO, partially self-funded insurance plan available and employer matching IRA. Salary range is \$17-\$20 per hour with bonus incentives. Apply online today at https://foseniorcare.ersp.biz/employment or call 815-545-4760. cc3-5

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CLUES DOWN

- Supreme god of ancient Egyptians
- Nevada city
- Energy, style and enthusiasm
- Bird's beak
- Language
- Midway between south and southeast
- Punjab village
- Small biting flies
- Sportscaster Patrick
- A way to get around
- Repeat
- A way to cook with fat
- Temporary loss of consciousness
- Reciprocal of a sine
- Fir tree genus
- "Transformers" director Michael
- Criminals who steal
- Genus of leaf-footed bug
- Music product
- "Talk to you"
- Santa says it three times
- Doctors' group
- African nation
- Ageless
- When you hope to get somewhere
- Worn
- Deprives of vigor
- Used to have (Scottish)
- Where you live
- Muslim ruler title
- Basics
- Type of drug (abbr.)
- Spanish soldier
- It precedes two
- Illuminated

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A Thousand Words Photography
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Mandy Eaton
815-791-2913

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- Garden Tractors
- Snowmobiles
- Appliances
- Anything Metal

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36. One point south of due east
37. Assist in a crime
38. Greek mythological personification of Earth
39. A major division of geological time
40. German courtesy title
41. English family dating back to Norman times
44. Discounts
45. South American nation
48. Former Milwaukee Buck Michael
49. Hostile
50. Passports and drivers licenses are two
51. Discourages from doing

CLUES ACROSS

- Where entertainers perform
- Miller beer variety
- Ageless
- River in SE Europe
- Able to be repaired
- Type of wrap
- Atomic #54
- Type of tent
- U.S. Treasury position
- Opposed to
- Protective covering
- Bridge building degree
- Clouding of the lens
- Priestess of Hera loved by Zeus
- Unacceptable
- Mr. T's "The A-Team" character
- American national park

CLUES DOWN

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Photo by Eric Fisher

ICE CONFERENCE CHAMP—Brock Finch finished first in the conference tournament on Saturday in Wilmington by defeating Aiden Shultz of Reed-Custer by fall in 2:59.

Coalers win all but three to the Comets

The Comets hosted state-ranked Coal City on Thursday in front of a senior night crowd but the Coalers were just too tough. Reed-Custer won at three weight levels but gave up the rest to the powerful Coalers who are the ICE conference champions.

Coal City 60, Reed-Custer 11

- 106—Drinkwine, Colton (RC) over Munsterman, Jake maj dec 13-3
- 113—Harris, Cole (RC) over Piatak, Jason maj dec 10-2
- 120—Petersen, Owen (CC) over Wood, Kaaden fall 1:27
- 126—Lindemuth, Culan (CC) by forfeit
- 132—Morris, Cooper (CC) over Gullquist, Tanner fall 1:43
- 138—Eggleston, Jeremy (RC) over Munsterman, Luke dec. 5-1
- 144—Kenney, Aidan (CC) over Hickman, Jordan, fall 1:31
- 150—Carlson, Alex (CC) over Billingsley, Brock, fall 1:49
- 157—Garner, Mason (CC) over Newbrough, Reed, fall 3:40
- 165—Wilson, Tr. (CC) over Shultz, Aiden, T-fall 20-2 (OT)
- 175—Benson, Landin (CC) over Vogler, Nathan, fall 2:25
- 190—Poyner, Cade (CC) over Garcia, William fall 1:43
- 215—Keigher, John (CC) over Alaimo, Dominic, dec. 7-1
- 285—Waliczek, Alec (CC) over Mounts, Christian maj dec 13-3

Coal City matmen rule the ICE

The 2025 ICE Conference Wrestling Championships brought excitement and competition to Wilmington High School on Saturday, where Coal City claimed the team title with an impressive score of 260.5 points.

Reed-Custer took second with 162.5 points, followed by Peotone (68), Lisle (64), Manteno (54), and host Wilmington (52).

Coal City's dominance was evident across multi-

ple weight classes, where they secured first-place finishes in nine divisions, a likely prelude as to what will happen Feb. 8 when they enter the Herscher regional.

Standout performances included Owen Petersen (113), who continued his stellar 31-2 season with a quick pin in the championship bout, and Landin Benson (175), who showcased his strength with a 30-second fall to secure his

title to improve to 28-2 overall.

Other Coal City champions included Culan Lindemuth (120, 26-9), Luke Munsterman (132, 28-10), Aidan Kenney (144, 27-9), Mason Garner (157, 24-5), Brock Finch (165, 23-6), John Keigher (215, 22-1), and Alec Waliczek (285, 14-4).

Placing second for the Coalers were Jason Piatak (25-12) who was defeated by Comet Colton

Drinkwine at 106, Cooper Morris (29-4) who lost 4-2 to Alex Ferari of Lisle at 126, Roberto Rodriguez (21-4) who get pinned 5:23 by Reed-Custer's Jeremy Eggleston at 138, Noah Houston (21-9) who was edged 6-3 by Peotone's Connor Pasch at 150 and Cade Poyner (24-4) who get pegged by Wilmington rival Logan VanDuyne at 190.

Reed-Custer's showing was highlighted by first-place finishes from Colton Drinkwine (106) and Jeremy Eggleston (138). Drinkwine secured his title with a decisive 8-1 victory, while Eggleston maintained his near-perfect record with a fall in the finals.

For Wilmington, the home crowd cheered as VanDuyne (190) captured the Wildcats' sole first-place finish with a third-period fall in his championship match.

Wilmington's Oakley Rivera (132) also reached the finals, finishing in second place.

If the Coalers finish with nothing less than firsts and seconds like they did during the ICE tournament they will advance all starters to the sectional which will be Feb. 14 at home.

Coal City's depth and dominance secured them the title, reaffirming their position as a powerhouse in the ICE Conference.



Photo by Eric Fisher

INCHES TO GO—Coal City senior Alec Waliczek was able to pin Matthew Stone of Herscher on Saturday to win the ICE Conference tournament championship at 285 pounds.



Photo by Amy Walker

COAL CITY'S JULIAN MICETICH puts up a shot against Peotone on Friday. Coal City will host Pontiac on Friday.

Coalers keep sight of ICE crown

A pair of victories for the Coal City boys basketball team last week kept them in prime shape for the ICE conference title.

The Coalers were to face Streator last night (Tuesday) to decide who ranks at the top of the conference. When these two played back on Dec. 13 the Bulldogs won it 46-26. But with Coal City hosting the hope is they won it the second time around.

On Friday the Coalers escaped a close one, edging Peotone on the road 62-61.

Coal City almost let this one slip away after being up 36-25 at half-time

before the Blue Devils went on a 24-12 run to pull ahead 49-48 entering the final frame.

Peotone had a chance to make a free throw with 6.7 second left but missed when Coal City scored a three-pointer to win by one.

On Tuesday at home Coal City trailed 12-11 to Lisle at the intermission but rallied by outscoring the Lions 42-26 in the second half to win 53-38.

The Coalers (16-5 overall, 8-1 in league) host Pontiac on Friday before traveling to Wilmington on Tuesday.

Lady Coalers have a shot at ICE conference

The Coal City girls basketball team remained in the ICE conference driver's seat with a 9-1 record after defeating Streator on

Monday, 53-33.

Coal City was hot from the start, scoring 28 points in the first quarter while holding Streator to just 6.

Emma Rodriguez led the Lady Coalers with 14 points, Kylee Kennell put up 10 points, Jori Tucker finished with eight while Riley Walker and Laura Christopher chipped in with five points each.

On Thursday the Lady Coalers scored only one point in the fourth quarter but it made no difference as they upended Peotone 53-41.

Coal City jumped in front 13-5 in the first quarter before going on a 23-17 run in the second and 16-7 run in the third to coast to victory.

It was Emma Rodriguez night as she led Coal City with 19 points and 14 rebounds. Darcy Ness contributed 10 points towards the winning efforts while Sydney Larson chipped in with nine, Jori Tucker scored eight and Kylee Kennell had five points while dishing out six assists.

The Lady Coalers were impressive on the board with 45 rebounds while picking off 13 steals.

On Wednesday Coal City rallied late to defeat Joliet Catholic 53-48.

The Lady Coalers never gave up, battling back from a 21-15 half-time deficit to outscore JCA 23-13 in the fourth to seal with win.

Kennell was on target with 16 points, hitting 6-for-9 at the line, while delivering seven assists. Rodriguez stepped up for nine points and nine boards while Larson tallied 11 points and five rebounds. Tucker finished with six points, Laura

Christopher had five, Ness scored three, Riley Walker two and Becca Hall one.

The Lady Coalers are 18-6 overall with a big game at Wilmington (third in conference 6-3) on Thursday. The last time they played Wilmington they lost 42-38.

On Saturday they host Marquette for a 11 a.m. contest then on Monday they host Herscher who is 11-9 overall.



Photo by Amy Walker

GOING UP FOR a basket is Lady Coaler Chloe Pluger.

♥♥♥♥♥

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