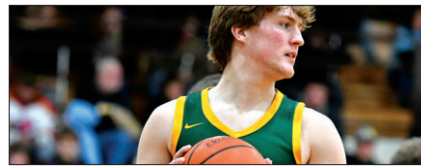


Coaler grad making his mark



Coalers ready for post season



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Coal City site among top 10 prime for development

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

Coal City's Inland Rail Park is prime for development, listed as one of the top 10 megasites in the state of Illinois.

The 1,470-acre industrial zone on the southwest corner of Broadway and Reed Road is among two Grundy County sites listed at the top by Intersect Illinois, the state's leading non-profit economic development organization.

Megasites are large tracks of land that are ready for development and Inland comes with a Union Pacific rail spur, access to municipal water and sewer, it's less than two miles from Interstate 55, and there is adjacent land available for expansion. Additionally, the land is part of an enterprise zone and tax increment

financing district.

Intersect Illinois works to identify sites ready for development and promote them across the country and around the world.

Coal City Village Administrator Matt Fritz met with the organization last week while attending the Illinois City County Managers Association [ICCMA] conference in Bloomington.

"We have one of the rated megasites in the state and we're on the short list of about eight throughout the state. Coal City is on their radar of landing some industrial clients," Fritz said.

The administrator's meeting with the organization came days after Gov. JB Pritzker announced the creation of a megasites development grant program that will provide \$40 million to boost the cre-

ation of these development sites.

"Major job creators are consistently looking for investment-ready sites. They can get up and running in a short amount of time and Illinois is home to some of the largest such sites in the country, all ripe and fresh for development," Pritzker said.

"The new Megasites Investment Program grants will help communities innovate their own business attraction efforts and will spur economic development in communities across our great state," he added.

The competitive grants are open to private entities, non-profits and local governments to cover site development expenses ranging from roads, electricity and water to broadband, remediation and land acquisition.

SEE MEGASITE, PAGE 2



INLAND RAIL PARK on the southwest corner of Broadway and Reed Road is listed as one of the top 10 megasites in the state of Illinois.

It's good time to be a Coaler



Photo by Eric Fisher
COALER CHEERLEADER AVA Houston is flipping over the success of her fellow Coalers. This week, Coal City High School is sending 14 wrestlers to the Illinois High School Association [IHSA] Individual State Wrestling Tournament in Champaign—action begins Thursday, two Coalers speakers are headed to Peoria on Friday for the IHSA State Speech contest and the boys basketball team gets the state series underway Saturday afternoon with a 1 p.m. regional game at Reed-Custer High School in Braidwood. It really is a good time to be a Coaler.

Charged up

Coal City considering addition of EV charging stations

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

The selling of electric vehicle may have gotten a jolt during 2022, however charging and range concerns continue to hold off new car buyers from moving to electric.

On average, an EV can travel 250 miles on a single charge. So a driver heading from Coal City to St. Louis should be able to reach the Gateway Arch without a second charge. But a motorist heading from St. Louis to Chicago would need to pull off the interstate for a boost right around Coal City.

Currently, the closest public charging stations along Interstate 55 are located in Dwight

and Joliet, but that could change as the village of Coal City is looking to add a couple of stations.

While attending the Illinois Municipal League [IML] conference last fall, the village clerk obtained some information about EV stations and it was passed along to the mayor.

"I think this is where things are going," Mayor Terry Halliday said. While he believes it could be some time for the masses to be driving EVs, those who do will need a place to recharge. He forwarded the information onto the village administrator and some inquiries were made.

SEE CHARGED, PAGE 2A



THE VILLAGE OF Coal City wants to see Reed Road included in the forthcoming multijurisdictional transportation master plan. Improvements to the roadway from Interstate 55 west to Route 47 have been identified in the village's strategic plan, and the hope is its a priority in the countywide document that is currently being developed.

Transportation master plan moving forward

Coal City, Diamond sign onto countywide project

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

Development of a multi-jurisdictional transportation plan is set to get underway in Grundy County, and the villages of Coal City and Diamond are signing on to participate.

Grundy County, and several of the communities within, began working on a master transportation study last year,

according to Coal City Village Administrator Matt Fritz.

The task at hand is for the county and communities to identify and prioritize the transportation needs for the area based on current and future need. In order to get a full picture of what community needs are, the study will take into account traffic and industrial activity in neighboring counties.

The plan is fact driven based on traffic data and utilization of software that shows where the problem areas are.

Completion of the plan is a means to improve economic investment, safety and effi-

cient traffic flow.

And, as Fritz said, "the end product will assist with prioritizing major transportation investment within Grundy County."

Coal City wants to see Reed Road included as a priority in the plan with an improvement from Interstate 55 west to Route 47.

The Reed Road project has been outlined in the village's

SEE PLAN, PAGE 2



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Coal City zoning map updated for 2023

STAFF REPORT

There are 18 zoning classifications in the village of Coal City, including one allowing commercial development within a neighborhood. That zoning was subject to discussion when it came time to adopt the annual zoning map.

The village annually reviews and adopts its zoning map, a document that places every parcel of land within the town into a specific zoning class, from one of six residential classes, to industrial or commercial, and each is designated on the map by a specific color.

The map was presented to the Village Board by the village's Planning and Zoning Board for adoption, and in doing so, the pink boxes located between two residential neighborhoods—Richards Crossing and Meadow Estates—was questioned by Trustee Tim Bradley.

The pink boxes on the map are located next to areas zoned as attached residential, medium density single family and highway commercial, and it's been that way on the map for a number of years.

Village Administrator Matt Fritz said the zoning designation of the undeveloped prop-

erty is part of a development agreement the Village Board approved when the Richards Crossing Subdivision was annexed, platted and approved.

Neighborhood commercial zoning is intended to provide locations for a broad selection of convenience goods—along the lines of a 7-Eleven or White Hen Pantry.

"Not to look at it with too sharp an eye, but of course I am as to how zoning can affect a neighborhood and the people I know that live in the neighborhood would probably not be to appreciative," Bradley said.

The development agreement that set the zoning at the far north end of the Richards Crossing Subdivision dissolved when the developer, Kennedy

Homes, abandoned the project.

"Now there is no development agreement to replace it, so essentially things did happen the way they were supposed to, however it can't really be developed that way, but there is nothing that says anything else other than that," Fritz told trustees.

Bradley wanted to know if the conditions are gone, why can't the Village Board change the zoning.

Fritz said he will work with the village attorney on a possible change in zoning for that property.

There were a couple of changes that were made from the prior year to include a change in classifications for two parcels located along Division Street to highway

commercial.

Additionally, it was noted the zoning map was updated to denote it is the 2023 map, not the 2022 map as printed on the document presented for approval.

In other matters from the Feb. 8 meeting:

- A \$233,158.70 payment to D Construction was approved for work completed on the sanitary treatment plant modernization.

"This payment will bring their total paid to date upwards of 67% of the total bid of \$1.8 million," Fritz said.

The project is nearing completion and according to the village engineer they are expecting a start up in the next two weeks.

- Village Clerk Pam Noffsinger presented the final

list of candidates for the April consolidated election.

Candidates for village president [mayor] are Dave Spesia and Ross Bradley. Alexis Stone is the sole candidate for village clerk.

Candidates for village trustee—three to be elected—are Noffsinger, Dan Greggain, Dave Togliatti and Neal Nelson.

- Trustees approved purchase orders totaling \$97,937.14. Included in the bills were a \$720 payment to repair a pipe at the Prairie Oaks treatment plant, \$349 for water testing, \$819 for a 37 gallon dehumidifier and \$1,000 dues payment to the Will/Grundy Major Crimes Task Force.

The next meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 22.

Charged

Grants, funded through the Rebuild Illinois Capital Fund, will range from \$250,000 to \$5 million with the award determined by acreage—up to \$5,000 per acre.

One of the goals of the state grant program is to attract job creators and revitalize underutilized areas.

"As companies act on needs to ramp up large scale production quickly, the availability of sites that can handle their requirements—from electricity, to water, to rail access—is critical to winning deals. We're fortunate to have many quality sites in Illinois and are working to make sure they are ready for companies to set up rapidly," said Intersect Illinois CEO Dan Seals.

Intersect Illinois has just over a dozen Grundy County sites listed with Inland Rail Park and NRG—the former Collins Generating Station—

located on Pine Bluff Road in Goose Lake Township being among the state's top 10 megasites.

The concept for Inland was presented to the village a decade ago with the understanding its financial support would ensure quick development. The village invested in the project, however the project did not go as proposed and the land—with the exception of the spur the village invested in—remains vacant.

Early on in the development of Inland, the state had promised funds to construct the interior rail and assist in covering the cost of needed roadway improvements. But all that was put on hold when Bruce Rauner took over as governor and the funding eventually fell through.

There has been a change in ownership of the land and renewed efforts to get the site developed.

What will come from the top 10 listing by Intersect or if the new state grant program will be used to boost development is not yet known.

Students of the Week



Courtesy photo
COAL CITY EARLY Childhood Center Students of the Week for Feb. 13 in row one (from left) are: Ariana Wilhoyt and Paisley Seidler. Charlotte Rush is in row two with Adler Proffitt, Savanna Connelly and Billy McMillan. Standing in row three are Kendall Veronda, Lyla Strunga, Gabriel Senisais, Hunter Terrel and Reid Trammel.

Charged

Now the city is reviewing a proposal from DirtRoad, a division of Carbon Solutions Group, to install two charging stations in public spaces within the village.

The administrator presented the company's proposal to the Village Board.

DirtRoad would offer both subscription and instant charging.

"This model allows the capital to be recouped by the investment group while Coal City hosts the development at no cost. After the stations exceed the utilization model to ensure proper return on investment for DirtRoad, Coal City shall be provided additional profits made available within the profit sharing from additional usage," city administrator Matt Fritz said.

The company would invest and maintain the infrastructure at their cost.

"We don't pay for the installation, we have a say in where they are installed, there is no loss if revenue doesn't cover and if it does, we share revenues. It's kind of a no brainer," Halliday said.

While not opposed to charging stations in town, Trustee Dave Spesia suggested taking some time to investigate to ensure the village is getting just the right company.

Trustees agreed to table any action with the DirtRoad proposal to allow for additional review.

Should the village decide to move forward with the proposal, Fritz noted there are still several steps that must be taken.

"Should you positively respond and want me to move forward two things will happen. Their team will come out and get into specifics of engineering as to where specifically the locations of the charging stations would occur and where the power will come from, and they would provide us the agreement and terms," Fritz said.

Although the proposal has been tabled indefinitely it is expected to be revisited at an upcoming meeting.

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Courtesy photo
COAL CITY INTERMEDIATE School Students of the Week for Feb. 13 are (from left): Zoiey Jones, Izzy Muhlenbruch, Mollee Offdenkamp and Gryson Johnson.

Plan

strategic plan and the hope of town officials is it also makes the master plan.

Local officials say the planning document will further help the county and municipalities acquire grant funding for roadway infrastructure improvements.

"It worked really well in getting state and federal funding when it came to Will County. This is a way to leverage of dollars. Once you have a prioritized plan with all of the multijurisdictional entities in then you tend to compete very well," Fritz said.

The Grundy Economic Development Council (GEDC) and Will County

Governmental League have been involved with the initial phases of plan development that have led to the next step in developing a master plan.

At its meeting last week, the Coal City Village Board approved entering into an intergovernmental agreement [IGA] to assist with funding the next phase of the project.

A grant was received from the Illinois Department of Transportation at a funding level of \$320,000, with a match that puts the rest of the cost on the county and municipalities.

Under the terms of the IGA, the costs will be split between the county and the communities of Coal City, Diamond, Channahon, Dwight, Mazon, Minooka and

Morris.

Coal City's contribution coming in will be \$8,404 and Diamond \$3,972.80.

Diamond's Village Board was slated to take action on the IGA at its meeting this week, as was the Grundy County Board.

The County has selected an engineering firm to provide the necessary services to complete the transportation plan. The firm selected through a process that began with requests for qualifications and interviews conducted by representatives from the county and participating municipalities—Fritz among them.


CDM Smith, the firm that provided Will County with its freight transportation and county master plan, was

selected to work with Grundy County.

As the county's consultant, CDM Smith will work with the county, municipalities, townships and various stakeholders to determine what is on the horizon for the area and what the current and future transportation needs are for the area.

Upon its approval, the master plan will serve to direct transportation projects and as a mechanism to secure funding for those improvements.

How does your portfolio measure up?



Tammy Johnson, AAMS*
 Financial Advisor

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- Check online event calendar at ccpld.org for a description of the events and to register.
- Check out our digital services available 24/7 on our website at www.ccpld.org.
- In-Person Adult Exercise, Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays 9-10 a.m.
- Thursday, Feb. 16-** Terrific Tots, 10 a.m.
- We Remember, 1-2:30 p.m.
- Jr. Artists, 3:30-4:30 p.m. 3rd thru 5th graders will be taken through step by step to create their very own "Shhh...I'm reading" door sign to take home.
- Terrific Tots, 6 p.m.
- Cooking Demo with Heather Shouse - Yeast & Quick Breads, 6-8 p.m.
- Friday, Feb. 17-** Play Days, 10-11 a.m.
- Bingo, 1-3 p.m.
- Ten Fridays, 3 p.m.
- Teen Lock-In - 5:30-8 p.m.
- Saturday, Feb. 18-** Stitch Group, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Kids Off the Grid, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.
- Monday, Feb 20-** End of Winter Read Challenge. Make sure to log all your reading and activities and put any tickets earned in your gift baskets through the Beanstack app.
- Makerspace Cart Mondays - All Day
- Terrific Tots - 10 a.m.
- Preschool Storytime - 11 a.m.
- Teen Artists, 1-2 p.m.
- Mahjong, 1-4 p.m.
- Family Lapsit, 6 p.m.
- Preschool Storytime - 6 p.m.
- Tuesday, Feb 21-** Happy Scrappers, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 22-** Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP), 9am-12pm
- Family Lapsit - 10 a.m.
- Preschool Storytime - 10 a.m.
- Fit 4 Life, 3:30-4:30 p.m.
- Teen Game Night, 5-6 p.m.

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher
 Ann Gill, editor

Building bridges

Coal City takes steps to secure federal bridge funds

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

The village of Coal City is investing in a professional consultant to acquire federal funds to help replace two bridges.

Ann L. Schneider & Associates has been brought on to assist the village in applying for federal funding to reconstruct the North Broadway and Valerio Road bridges.

Even though town officials have allocated a certain portion of state motor fuel tax [MFT] funds for the Broadway bridge, Village Administrator Matt Fritz said there is a federal program that allows the bundling of different bridge projects in order to get federal funds for all the improvements outlined within the bundle.

The Valerio Road bridge is scheduled for replacement within the 2024 capital improvement program, but as it turns out, "we need to replace that bridge yesterday," Fritz said.

Due to its current condition, the village was forced to close the bridge earlier this month.

Town officials are looking at various options when it comes to replacing that structure that has an average traffic count of under 15 cars per day.

Last summer the U.S. Department of Transportation allowed new infrastructure spending for the replacement of bridges with a focus on putting that money toward large scale projects, so those that do not reach \$1 million in capital spending are being bypassed.

So bundling the projects could be the best option for the village.

According to Fritz, Schneider has been working with the state and federal departments of transportation to define the bundling concept to allow more communities to compete for the available funds.

"In addition to the bundling, the conversation with Schneider has revealed the federal priority for pedestrian and bicycle connectivity through these pathways as well. Providing additional access to the North Broadway project is beneficial for the future and its will increase the total cost of the project to break through the funding threshold and qualify for DOT funds," Fritz said.

Schneider, a former Illinois secretary of transportation, has been successful in obtaining funding sources for multiple infrastructure projects many of them in Will County, and assisted Grundy County in obtaining planning dollars.

Her success is why the administrator sought the Board's approval in bringing her on for this project.

Schneider's firm will prepare a USDOT bridge investment program grant application for the village ahead of the June submission deadline, as well as review and make recommendations on other applicable grant programs.

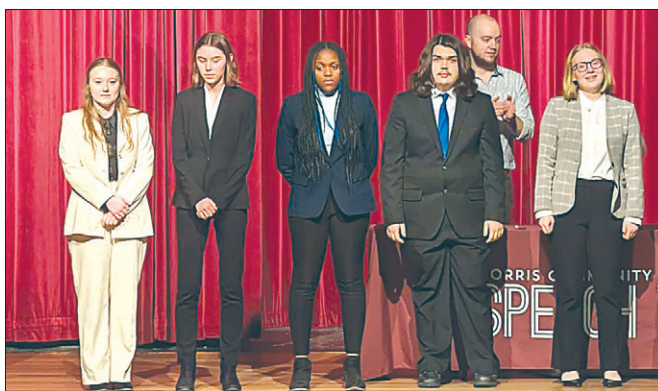
The cost of her services is \$200 per hour with a total cost not to exceed \$10,800.

"Her participation will hopefully prove to be a small investment compared to the total funds gained in the much needed replacement of these structures within the village," Fritz said.



Courtesy photo

IZZY KOSTBADE, a senior at Coal City High School, earned a second place finish in humorous interpretation to earn her third trip to the IHSA State Speech Contest. Kostbade, second from left, is pictured with the sectional finalists.



Courtesy photo

COAL CITY HIGH School freshman Jacob Cimino took third place in extemporaneous speaking at the sectional contest and earned his first trip to the IHSA State Speech Contest. Cimino, second right, is pictured with the sectional finalists.

Coalers will speak at state

STAFF REPORT

Coal City High School is sending two students to the Illinois High School Association state speech meet this weekend.

The Coalers will be represented by senior Izzy Kostbade and freshman Jacob Cimino who advanced to the state tournament based on their performances at the sectional meet hosted last weekend at Morris Community High School.

Kostbade will be returning for her third state appearance in humorous interpretation [HI]. Her presentation of "The 25th Annual Putnum County Spelling Bee," earned her a second place finish at the sectional tournament and a place on the state tournament roster.

Her category requires

participants to perform a humorous piece from a published work without the use of a script or props and within an eight minute time frame.

Cimino advances to the state tournament based on his third place finish at the sectional in extemporaneous speaking.

In this category, one of 15 in the state series, students present a speech on a topic that is provided to them. The student has 30 minutes to prepare the speech and seven minutes to deliver it.

There are two preliminary rounds in the state tournament and the scores from those presentations determine who moves on to the finals.

The state tournament gets underway Friday at the Peoria Civic Center. Kostbade's first round is set

for 3 p.m. Friday and her second round will begin at 9:45 a.m. on Saturday.

Cimino is the fifth speaker in the first round set for Friday afternoon, so he should speak at 2:20 p.m. The second preliminary round finds him as the final speaker in the 11 a.m. bracket with a speaking time of 11:50 a.m.

Those who make it to the final round will speak Saturday afternoon and the winners announced at a ceremony that evening.

Unlike other IHSA sanctioned activities, speech does not have classifications so all competitors—no matter school size or geographic location—are on the same playing field. The Coalers are ranked among the top 50 teams in the state.

As a team, the Coalers placed fourth at the Morris

Sectional.

The top three medal winners in each category at the sectional advance to the state tournament.

Four other members of the team placed at the sectional with the humorous duet acting team of juniors Chessa Kuhel and Kevin McConnell earning a fourth place finish.

Melody Kinder, a sophomore, placed fourth in oratory and Kuhel also took home a fourth place medal in prose.

Corinna Barkley, a sophomore, finished in fifth place in special occasion speaking and Kostbade earned a fifth place finish in poetry.

Additional members of the sectional team were Madison Wilson, Amelia Fritz, Logan Hausman, Kayla Connelly, Sam Vota, Bradley Burla and Grey Vanek.

Coal City Police activity up 57.5% from one year ago

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

The Coal City Police Department started off the new year with total officer activity recorded at 526 calls, an increase of nearly 57.5% from the same time one year earlier.

"It's been a busy January," Police Chief Chris Harseim told the Coal City Village Board.

Total officer activity is a combination of calls for service—those that come in from the public—and self initiated activity. Last month, the chief reports his officers were dispatched to 152 calls, meaning the other 374 were officer initiated.

The data from one year to the next shows the number of dispatched calls was up by 10, while officer initiated activity increased 94.79%.

Patrol officer Bandon Larson led the department in officer initiated calls at 75, while officer Kevin Jones had the highest volume of dispatched calls at 33.

"The guys are out doing what they are supposed to be doing. Stopping cars and finding what they can find," Harseim said.

There were 181 traffic stops last month, up 119 from the prior year, and resulted in 40 citations.

Harseim said the department had 22 criminal charges—arrest numbers typically seen in the warmer months of the year.

"That's pretty good for January. We really see figures like this in May, June and August. It really just been an extremely busy month for us," the Chief said.

The monthly report further noted officers made one driving under the influence

[DUI] arrest, handled five traffic accidents and investigated 10 ordinance violations.

In all, the activity for the month resulted in 203 written reports.

Now that the department has a full-time investigator, Harseim provided the Board with an update on the various cases Sgt. Jason Clark has been working on and that includes motor vehicle thefts, fraud, criminal damage to property and internet crimes, among others.

Harseim also shared an update from the Grundy County ProActive Unit that made 18 arrests in the month of January including nine felony and two warrant arrests.

Additionally, the unit seized around 122 grams of illegal substances, a firearm and a significant amount of cash.

"ProAct is doing very well," Harseim said.

The specialized crime fighting unit is overseen by the Grundy County Sheriff's Office and is manned and supported by the various municipalities and police departments across the county.

Coal City graduate on top 10 marketing team

A Coal City man attending East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, TN is on a team that is a Top 10 national finalist in the 2023 American Marketing Association (AMA) Collegiate Case Competition, sponsored by The Wall Street Journal.

Nolan O'Keefe, a 2019 graduate from Coal City High School, is on the ETSU team competing against schools from across the nation.

The ETSU students' performance in the preliminary phase of the competition earned them a finalist spot in the top 10. They will present their analysis at the upcoming AMA International Collegiate Conference in New Orleans in late March and early April.

The AMA Collegiate Case Competition is an academic year-long event that brings together top marketing students to work on a business challenge submitted by a sponsoring organization. The 2022-23 case sponsor, The Wall Street Journal, provided a detailed marketing problem and is looking to gain the perspective of AMA students as they develop a marketing strategy in this nationally recognized competition.

O'Keefe is one of eight members on the team. ETSU's AMA organization, led by instructor Michelle Sullivan,



NOLAN O'KEEFE (fourth from left) from Coal City is on a marketing team from East Tennessee State University that has made it to the top 10 finalists in a national contest.

earned this recognition in its second year as an active chapter.

The collegiate case competition is open to undergraduate student teams at schools that have an AMA-affiliated active collegiate chapter.

The competition is designed to provide members the opportunity to work together on a real-world marketing challenge, while also providing the case competition sponsor direct input from the best marketing students to find solutions to their marketing problems.

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Notice of Foreclosure of 925 E. North St.

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
GRUNDY COUNTY - MORRIS, ILLINOIS

PennyMac Loan Services, LLC; Plaintiff, -v.- Katherine McClelland; Unknown Heirs and Legatees of Edward Konopasek Jr; Unknown Owners and Nonrecord Claimants; Defendants, 2022 FC 95

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION

NOTICE IS GIVEN TO YOU: Katherine McClelland Unknown Heirs and Legatees of Edward Konopasek Jr Unknown Owners and Nonrecord Claimants

That this case has been commenced in this Court against you and other defendants, praying for the foreclosure of a certain Mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to-wit: COMMONLY KNOWN AS: 925 E North St Morris, IL 60450

and which said Mortgage was made by: Edward Konopasek Jr the Mortgageor(s), to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for Mortgage Research Center, LLC dba Veterans United Home Loans, as Mortgagee, and recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds of Grundy County, Illinois, as Document No. 578985; and for other relief, that summons was duly issued out of said Court against you as provided by law and that the said suit is now pending. YOU MAY STILL BE ABLE TO SAVE YOUR HOME. DO NOT IGNORE THIS DOCUMENT.

By order of the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, this case is set for Mandatory Mediation on 3/17/2023 at 10:00 am at the Grundy County Courthouse, 111 E. Washington St., Morris, IL 60450. A lender representative will be present along with a court appointed mediator to discuss options that you may have and to pre-screen you for a potential mortgage modification.

NOTICE OF MANDATORY MEDIATION YOU MUST APPEAR ON THE MEDIATION DATE GIVEN OR YOUR RIGHT TO MEDIATION WILL TERMINATE. NOW, THEREFORE, UNLESS YOU file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case in the Office of the Clerk of this Court, Corri Trotter Clerk of the Circuit Court, Grundy County 111 East Washington Street, Room 30 P.O. Box 707 Morris, IL 60450

on or before March 17, 2023. A DEFAULT MAY BE ENTERED AGAINST YOU AT ANY TIME AFTER THAT DAY AND A JUDGMENT MAY BE ENTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRAYER OF SAID COMPLAINT. CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C. Attorneys for Plaintiff 15W030 North Frontage Road, Suite 100 Burr Ridge, IL 60527 (630) 794-5300 DuPage # 15170 Winnebago # 531 Our File No. 14-22-08983 NOTE: This law firm is a debt collector. 13213426

Published in the Coal City Courant on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 22 and March 1, 2023.

Attorney Schmidt files Cedzidlo estate claim notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT GRUNDY COUNTY, ILLINOIS

2023-PR-9

In the Matter of the Estate of Sharon M. Cedzidlo, Deceased

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given to creditors of the death of Sharon M. Cedzidlo. Letters of office were issued on January 27, 2023 to John V. Magiera as independent executor, whose attorney of record is Charles L. Schmidt, 117 W. Washington St., Morris, Illinois 60450.

Creditors against the estate may be filed within six months from the date of first publication. Any claim not filed within six months from the date of first publication or claims not filed within three months from the date of mailing or delivery of Notice to Creditor, whichever is later, shall be barred. Claims may be filed in the Office of the Circuit Clerk, Grundy County Courthouse, PO Box 707, 111 E. Washington Street, Morris, IL 60450, or with the representative through her attorney, or both. Copies of claims filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative within 10 days after it has been filed.

E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To efile, 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.

Charles L. Schmidt Law Office of Charles L. Schmidt, Ltd. 117 West Washington Street Morris, IL 60450 (815) 942-0701 grundylaw@gmail.com Published in the Coal City Courant on Feb. 1, 8 and 15, 2023.

Coal City School District accepting bids for 2023 Middle School Flooring Project

PUBLIC NOTICE

Coal City Community Unit School District #1 will be accepting bids for 2023 Coal City Middle School Flooring Project. Plans and Specifications are available on February 17, 2023 from Cordogan Clark & Associates, Inc. plan room www.cordoganclark.com. Sealed Bids, conspicuously marked, shall be received until 11:00 am and opened 11:15 am, March 8, 2023 at the District Office, 550 S. Carbon Hill Road, Coal City, IL, at which time they shall be opened and read aloud. A mandatory pre-bid meeting is scheduled for 10:00 am, February 23, 2023 at the front entrance of Coal City Middle School, 500 S. Carbon Hill Road, Coal City, IL. Prevailing wage rates shall apply to this Project. Each bid must conform and be responsive to all pertinent bidding and contract documents including Contractor qualifications as specified in said documents. Published in the Coal City Courant on Wednesday, February 15, 2023.

Notice of Foreclosure of 260 7th Avenue

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT GRUNDY COUNTY - MORRIS, ILLINOIS

BANK OF AMERICA, N.A.; Plaintiff, -v.- JASON R. BROOKS; TARA BROOKS, AKA TARA R. BROOKS; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS; ESTATE OF EDWARD J. MALEK, DECEASED; Defendants, Case No. 2022FC102

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE

The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, notice is hereby given you, Unknown Owners and Non-Record Claimants, Estate of Edward J. Malek, deceased, that the said suit has been commenced in the Circuit Court of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, Grundy County, Illinois by the said plaintiff against you and other defendants, praying for the foreclosure of a certain Mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to-wit: Parcel 1: Lot 2 in Block 3 in Out Lot #1, First Addition to South Wilmington, of Chicago, Wilmington and Vermillion Coal Company's Subdivision of the South 1/2 of the West 1/2 of the Southwest 1/4 of Section 11, Township 31 North, Range 8, East of the Third Principal Meridian, in Grundy County, Illinois.

Parcel 2: A strip of land 50 feet in width as now located through the West 1/2 of said Section 11; the center line of said strip being 58 feet East of and parallel to the West line of said Section 11 and running in a Northerly direction and adjoining Lot 2 in Block 3 in Out Lot #1, First Addition to South Wilmington.

Parcel 3: Lot 3 in Block 3 in Outlot 1, First Addition of South Wilmington, Grundy County, Illinois; also described as Lot 3, Block 3, of Greenfield Township, Coal Company Subdivision of Outlot 1, Grundy County, Illinois; also described as Lot 3 in Block 3 in Outlot 1 of the Chicago, Wilmington and Vermillion Coal Company's Subdivision of the West 1/2 of the South 1/2 of the Southwest 1/4 of Section 11, Township 31 North, Range 8, East of the Third Principal Meridian, in Grundy County, Illinois.

Parcel 4: A strip or land 50 feet in width as now located through the West 1/2 of said Section 11; the center line of said strip being 58 feet east of and parallel to the West line of said Section 11, commencing at the Southwest corner of said Section 11 and running in a Northerly direction and adjoining Lot 3 in Block 3 in Out Lot #1, First Addition to South Wilmington; (excepting from the above parcels coal and other minerals underlying said premises and the right to mine and remove the same), in Grundy County, Illinois. 260 7th Avenue, South Wilmington, IL 60474 12-11-358-002

Now, therefore, unless you, Unknown Owners and Non-Record Claimants, Estate of Edward J. Malek, deceased, and the said above named defendants, file your answer to the complaint in said suit or otherwise make your appearance therein, in the office of the Clerk of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, Grundy County, Illinois, on or before March 24, 2023, default may be entered against you at any time after that day and a Judgment entered in accordance with the prayer of said Complaint.

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 <http://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 contact the Clerk of this Court. Andrew K. Weiss (6284233) MANLEY DEAS KOCHALSKI LLC Attorneys for Plaintiff One East Wacker, Suite 1250, Chicago, IL 60601 Phone: 312-651-6700; Fax: 614-220-5613 Email: akweiss@manleydeas.com One of Plaintiff's Attorneys File Number: 22-037247 13212481

Published in the Coal City Courant on Wednesday, Feb. 1, 8 and 15, 2023.

Village of Coal City to host public hearing on zoning code text amendment

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING VILLAGE OF COAL CITY ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Village of Coal City Planning and Zoning Board will conduct a public hearing on March 6, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., at the Coal City Village Hall, 515 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL, to consider approval of a Zoning Code Text Amendment that would amend a series of items concerning the requirements surrounding solar panel installations within the community.

At the public hearing, all persons interested will be given an opportunity to provide oral and written testimony.

Published in the Coal City Courant on Feb. 15, 2023.

Free Press Newspapers readers

SOUND-OFF

To voice your opinion 24 hours a day, go to www.freepressnewspapers.com or call 815-634-0317

Sound-Off is a 24-hour phone line provided to give readers a chance to voice their opinions. Calls may be anonymous.

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lish these remarks the newspaper makes every effort to forward unpublished comments to the parties to whom they are directed.

The comments stated are the opinions and ideas of the callers and not that of the newspaper. Information may not constitute the actual events or facts of a particular topic.

Submissions by email to: courant@fpnusa.com with "soundoff" in the subject line or go to www.freepressnewspapers.com, -> Submit Sound-off or call 815-634-0317. Please state the town in which you are calling from or in regards to. Mail comments to Sound-Off, 271 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL 60416 or 111 S. Water St., Wilmington, IL 60481.

Guns again

WILMINGTON—It seems, that most individuals apprehended or charged with a firearms offense have some sort of criminal record and a previous ban on having firearms in their possession. Yet, these criminals frequently obtain and use firearms even with the imposed bans. So is it these criminals, like Boy Scouts give their pledge to be good citizens and all is good? My question is, who oversees these individuals when bail is granted? The days of the "Wild West" don't appear to be over.

Balloon watch

SHADOW LAKES—You know who I am. I cannot believe that our military that is so under-educated that it took a civilian spotting this balloon from China. Covering the United States to call the government. Where is NORAD?

No scientific proof

WILMINGTON—This is to the caller from Diamond who gave a lengthy dissertation of their religious beliefs. The key word being beliefs. These are not facts as there is no scientific proof of the existence of god. If you want to believe no one is stopping you but you can't force me to buy into the childish, superstitious nonsense you listed just because you say so. Being an Atheist can get abuse from the angry, hateful Christians. Don't you remember the Klan is a Christian organization. I'd like to close with a couple of quotes. First from Bertrand Russell "to be fair to Satan we've only heard Gods side of it." And from Ambrose Bierce "religion is a daughter of hope and fear explaining the ignorance the nature of the unknowable." I hope this helps.

State of the Union

COAL CITY—The State of the Union address by President Biden was on the News Feb. 7th. But I personally didn't watch the President on the news so I didn't have to listen to him tell us how great everything is going. I had more fun watching paint dry on the walls instead of having to listen to a man that stole classified documents from Congress and committed an act of treason when he was a Senator.

Distracting America

BRAIDWOOD—First it was one balloon the Air Force shot down. Then it became two and now four unknown objects that have been shot down over the past two weeks. China is denying the first one was a spy balloon; we don't know about the rest. That's because I believe it's all a conspiracy by President Biden and his friends in China. What better way to distract the people of his own country than having four unknowns shot down. He comes out looking like a hero by having ordered the balloons be shot down. How is it we've never heard of these balloons invading our airspace during the past four presidents when suddenly there are four under Biden? I'm telling you it's all being planned by Biden as a distraction so we forget about all the things the progressives are pulling.

The loudmouth shrew

WILMINGTON—"He is the most corrupt president in American history." I already knew this about Trump but it was Trump himself saying this about President Biden. Then I saw Marjorie Taylor Greene screaming "Liar. Liar." at the State of the Union address when President Biden said some Republicans wanted to cut some Medicare and Social Security. How is that a lie when Republican Rick Scott has already suggested it? She later said "I don't clap for liars." Yet she claps endlessly for Trump. She is a loudmouthed, attention-seeking, classless shrew who blackmailed McCarthy into getting premier committee assignments.

Meet the candidates

BRAIDWOOD—One of our local political groups is hosting a Meet the Candidates night on March 1 at the Main Street Banquet Hall. While a very nice venue, seating is extremely limited for an event of this type. During the last Meet the Candidates night held there in 2020 it

was extremely cramped and tightly packed due to the amount of attendees. Many people complained that it was quite warm and uncomfortable to say the least and that was with only having candidates for our city council participating. Now they're adding in school board candidates as well which will only add to the problems experienced during the last one. Why not hold it on the stage at the Reed Custer auditorium like it had been a few times in the past? Plenty of room, attendees can space out if they'd like and there's already a speaker system in place so the people won't struggle to hear what's being said. If the auditorium is unavailable for the selected date, how about one of the three school gymnasiums? If it's a matter of the school district charging for use of the facility maybe the school board should waive the fee as it would be benefiting all residents of the school district as well, not just the city of Braidwood. We all know that the politics of our small town is a tightly wound fuse. Packing that many politically opinionated people into such a small space and then shaking them up is just a recipe for disaster. Will people be turned away if the current selected venue reaches fire code capacity? That would be a real shame.

Revaluation needed

WILMINGTON—Since the Wilmington Area Historical Society became the owner of acreage of property last year the museum will now have a revenue each year around \$21,000 a year. Maybe it's time for the city of Wilmington to re-evaluate their current lease. Maybe it's time for the Wilmington Area Historical Society to start paying their way by paying the utilities and paying more rent. It's time the taxpayers not to be responsible for these debits since the museum is making an income. The museum has a lease with the city of Wilmington paying \$1 per year for use of the old city hall. The city of Wilmington owns the building. They also pay all the utilities. It's the taxpayers' hard earned money that's paying these bills. It's time for the city to revisit and review its lease with their tenant since the museum has this type of income. Maybe they can afford to buy their own building like they did the Eagle Hotel before they lost it due to a fire. It's your tax money. I think it would be appropriate for the museum to pay their fair share of expenses and give the taxpayers a break for once and not depend on taxpayers' money to support the Wilmington Area Historical Society. Food for thought.

Just a housekeeper

WILMINGTON—I have been a housekeeper just shy of 10 years. Once the Covid 19 pandemic struck, I, without hesitation, worked seven days a week. I worked alongside all the other long term care workers who chose to put themselves at risk and continue to work just like all the psws and the nurses. However, I am just a housekeeper. I am just the person who cleans up the mess others leave behind. I open the curtains the others don't have time to open to bring sunlight to residents. I am just the housekeeper who made sure your loved one's room was in order. I am just a housekeeper who greets your loved one every day and tries to bring a smile on their face. I am just a housekeeper who tries to help support residents, help clean up after residents and make their little room home. I am just a housekeeper who had to go into every single outbreak room during the pandemic. I am just the housekeeper who was never mentioned during the pandemic. I am just a housekeeper so I didn't receive a wage increase or was recognized by the news or the government or the owners of these money hungry greedy nursing homes. When long term care is in crisis mode because they have no staff I am just a housekeeper who was bounced around to different departments when I was needed in order to help the nursing home function day to day. I am just a housekeeper who would get home from my shift and the phone would ring for me to go back to work to work in a different department. I am just the housekeeper who helped the entire pandemic - where I contracted Covid and brought it home exposing my family. I am just a housekeeper



"SIR, IT'S TOM CRUISE. HE WANTS TO FILM HIS NEXT MOVIE HERE... TOP GUN: MAVERICK POPS A FEW CHINESE SPY BALLOONS."

who is trying to pay my bills. I am just a housekeeper who contributes to a privately owned nursing home as much as I possibly can. I am just the housekeeper who tries to help provide the tasks a resident needs. I am just the housekeeper who was forgotten about the entire pandemic. I am just the housekeeper who this week was notified the government is no longer funding the financially greedy nursing home I work at. As a result, I am just the housekeeper who is now being given six shifts every two weeks to survive. I am just the housekeeper who showed up the entire pandemic for the residents and for my coworkers just to be completely disposable in the end. I am just a housekeeper begging the government to end for profit nursing homes. I am just a housekeeper begging somebody to care about all the staff working in long term care. I am just a housekeeper asking for six shifts every two weeks. I am just a housekeeper begging the ministry to take over and fire all the inadequate people in charge of nursing homes. I am just a housekeeper who works weekends and holidays, outbreaks just to get her hours cut in the end. I am just a housekeeper who would love to thank the management team and owners of the for profit home I work at for showing me just how unimportant and disposable I am to long term care. I am just a housekeeper who essentially wasted the last decade working in long term care for absolutely nothing.

Anyone but Trump

COAL CITY—Does anyone know of a political group I can donate to that will support any Republican but Trump. I think if there was a fund created in America to elect anyone but Trump it would grow by millions of dollars before the next election.

Far from over

MORRIS—President Biden announced in January that the U.S. will provide 31 American-made Abram tanks to Ukraine-Russian War a cost of \$400 million. The Ukraine Troops will receive tank training outside Ukraine. Best decision, we sure don't need World War III because we, the USA became involved with our troops in the war. So far \$45 billion tax dollars have been given to Ukraine War and it's far from over.

Address immigration

MORRIS—Are you all aware of all the American Indian organizations requesting monies for food, water, clothing, schooling, etc.? At Christmas time we received at least five requests from five different American Indian organizations for help financially for their loved ones. It's unbelievable in 2023 arrogant President Biden and VP Harris's State of the union message was like trying to sell manure to the farmers. Not one word about illegal immi-

gration mess. Two more years of this upside down world he put us in.

Bless you

MORRIS—Regarding the article in the Feb. 8 Sound-off from someone in Diamond, "No Christian is hateful," your article was beautiful. God bless you.

About love

WILMINGTON—With Valentine's Day here I would like to share the two things I know about love. First, the one who loves the least controls the relationship and second, the opposite of love isn't hate. It is indifference. Penny Lane

Their time is up

BRAIDWOOD—In response to the person who keeps calling into Sound-off telling of the great acts of the tiny little town of Braidwood's current administration who is probably someone from the administration. They are basically all a bunch of crooks. What in the name if anything good is going to come from three dealerships in this town? Nothing. All that is doing is putting money in their pockets because it's bringing in tax money and nobody in this town is ever going to see it and they know who they are. When you drive through this town it is a business graveyard. It's time to remove these leeches who are sucking the life out of good hardworking, paying taxpayers. They also intimidate people because if you speak your mind there will be pay back. Is that how you want to live in this town? It's time for the old guard to get on out and bring on the new guard.

Bait and switch

WILMINGTON—I hope the voters are paying attention to the bait and switch the Republicans are currently engaged in. Before the midterms all we heard about was the border, inflation, gas prices, food prices and especially egg prices. Now going into the 2024 campaign Republicans have no plans to solve any of those problems because that isn't what they do. Their mantra is government doesn't work and they have to make sure it doesn't. So now they roll out abortion, TRT, trans kids and their parents, drag queen performances including story hours and any other ways they can make their constituents hate and fear the Left. You notice it doesn't cost them anything to promote anger and then put a bounty on private citizens to entice the rabble to violence. I don't know how any of that is going to help the country but I think that is the point. These people are cruel and habitual liars. Why wouldn't George Santos run as a Republican? So when they say they are not going to get rid of Social Security and Medicare remember they sit in rows of the law. Liars.

New Mendota wheat mill ramps up supply in northern Illinois

BY DANIEL GRANT
FARMWEEK

The addition of the largest, newly built wheat mill in the U.S. three years ago near Mendota certainly added to demand for the crop in northern Illinois and other regions of the country.

And farmers responded to increased demand and strong global prices for wheat, according to Joe Greene of Archer Daniels Midland Co. in Decatur.

Greene serves as the commercial director of milling and baking solutions for ADM Carbohydrate Solutions. He discussed the market and ADM's state-of-the-art wheat mill in Mendota during a recent interview and private tour of the facility.

"Since we came to Mendota, we've truly seen an increase in wheat acres in the area. We expected that to happen and it's following through for sure," Greene said.

"Global prices are helping to continue to support that increase in acres," he said. "We're very well situated to continue to provide farmers a fantastic outlet for locally grown wheat."

ADM's massive wheat mill in Mendota essentially replaced a much older facility in Chicago. The new mill has the capacity to produce a whopping 3 million pounds of flour per day, equivalent to 60 semi truckloads.

The mill maintains ADM's markets for flour from the Chicagoland area and northwest Indiana to northwest Ohio, southern Wisconsin and northeast Iowa.

The fully automated mill also features a loop track system to unload 110-car unit trains. Wheat unloaded from the trains moves on underground conveyors into the mill for testing and processing.



Photo by Daniel Grant of FarmWeek

ADM'S WHEAT MILL in Mendota has the capacity to produce about 3 million pounds of flour per day. The soft red wheat used at the facility is sourced from northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin while hard red and spring wheat are shipped to the plant via trains.

Nearly all the soft red wheat processed at the mill is sourced from northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. The mill's multifaceted logistical capabilities also allow for the sourcing

of hard red wheat, mostly from Kansas and Nebraska, along with spring wheat from the Dakotas and Minnesota.

"We're supporting local farmers with about

one-third of our production here on a daily basis and we continue to support other areas," Greene said.

"Mendota is well situated in northern Illinois to have access to local soft red wheat crops as well as our unit train unloader that allows us to bring in shuttles of wheat from the Southern Plains on the hard red wheat side and from the Northern Plains on the spring wheat side."

What is all the flour from the ADM mill used for across the upper Midwest? It depends on the wheat class and protein levels of each crop.

Flour from soft red wheat is typically used to bake items such as cakes and cookies. Flour from hard red wheat is used for breads and bagels while different blends of wheat flour are used for batterings, breadings, tortillas and frozen pizza among other items.

"It's all about how each flour performs in the oven," Greene said.

The mill provides farmers with other key opportunities. It produces about 22% mill feed, which goes into local markets for livestock feed.

And the unit trains which bring wheat to LaSalle County are reloaded with corn, which is shipped from northern Illinois to feed yards in destinations such as Texas and California.

"This helps maintain successful farming operations going forward," Greene said.

Since opening the Mendota mill in 2019, ADM Milling also achieved carbon neutral status, which it passes on to consumers and farmers through sustainability programs that offer payments per acre for locally-grown crops.

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

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Wilmington Freemason's chili cook-off seeks entries

The Wilmington Freemasons Lodge #208 will be having their 13th annual Chili Cook-Off to fund the Pedals for Progress program on Sunday, Feb. 26 from 1 p.m.

to 4 p.m. Tasting and a bowl of house chili \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids over 11 and free for kids 11 and under. There will also be \$1 hot dogs available. Wilmington Masonic Lodge is located at 311 Main St., Wilmington. Think you have what it takes to be the Chili King? Register to be a contestant. Call Ben Stickel 815-370-7331 or Matt Lohmar 815-210-9606.

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Augustana College fall dean's list

Augustana College announced area students named to the dean's list for the 2022-23 fall semester. Students earning this academic honor maintained a gpa of 3.5 or higher on a four-point scale. Local students include Casey Crompt, of Braidwood and McKenzie Hennessy, of Coal City.

In honor of the Chiefs' victory, try a Kansas City Ice Water cocktail

Congratulations, Kansas City Chiefs! For the second time in four years, you are Super Bowl champs! This is the third Super Bowl victory for the Chiefs, but the 6th championship for the franchise. The Chiefs franchise won three AFL championships before the AFL/NFL merger, and the first of those was won as the Dallas Texans in 1962.

Many mixology historians swear that the drink was invented in Iowa, others lean toward Wisconsin as lemon-lime soda tops several drinks from the Badger State.

One thing is certain: Kansas City embraced this drink and has made it a part of nearly every tailgate, game day party, and backyard barbeque. Here's what we know about the KC ice water: It's easy to prepare, easy to drink, and could be mistaken for ice water (depending on the quality of the local water).



THE SUNDAY COCKTAIL
Brian Rung



spice up your KC Ice Water with some unique floral notes and botanicals, use Bombay Sapphire Gin in place of a traditional London dry gin. It is strictly a matter of personal preference. Many of the bars that tend to serve a younger clientele use Bombay Sapphire while bars of the more traditional "dive bar" variety use Beefeater in the KC Ice Water. In the tailgate setting it can be a challenge to haul dozens of limes to the pre-game party, but make every effort to use fresh lime juice as opposed to the stuff in the green squeeze bottle. Fresh is best, every time. Any quality unflavored vodka will work in the KC Ice Water. If you have a favorite vodka, use it. I use the standard Smirnoff red label in any drink that calls for vodka. The soda component of this drink will spark some debate, although the "official" soda of the KC Ice Water is Sprite. Sometimes club soda is used with fresh lemon and lime juice, but Sprite from a soda gun is more than likely topping the majority of KC Ice Water served in the bars around Kansas City. A store brand soda will also work in the KC Ice Water, as long as that soda is lemon-lime soda. I prefer cans of soda when mixing drinks as soda from the can tends to hold a bit more carbonation than soda from the bottle. Once a large bottle is opened and closed a few times the "sparkle" or carbonation tends to decline. Preparation is simple and straightforward. Ice in the glass, followed by gin, vodka, and fresh lime juice. Top with soda, and serve. That's all there is to it. Here's to you, Kansas City! The Kansas City Ice Water is built and served in an Old Fashioned glass. Fill glass with ice, and add:
1 oz. London Dry gin
1 oz. vodka
Juice from 1 lime (.75 oz)
Top with Sprite or other lemon-lime soda, at least 4 oz.
Garnish with lime wedge
Until next week, enjoy responsibly.

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Pritzker signs measures ahead of budget address

BY NIKA SCHOONOVER
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS
SPRINGFIELD - Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed 15 bills into law, tackling policy areas from tourism to prison reform and making it easier for people previously convicted of felonies to legally change their name.

The laws passed the General Assembly in their recently concluded lame duck legislative session in January, and Pritzker's signature came less than a week before his budget address, scheduled for Wednesday at the Capitol.

Tourism districts House Bill 268, effective immediately, creates a framework for local governments to increase funding for local tourism projects in collaboration with hotels by creating local tourism districts. Hotels can qualify for these tourism districts if they can shoulder half of the proposed costs. If petitioning hotels are approved, they can charge up to a 5% rate per-room per-night that will go toward a fund overseen by a state-certified local tourism bureau.

Under the new law, if those individuals are sentenced to a term of life in prison, they are eligible for a parole review after serving 40 or more years of their sentence. Cars and vans as school buses House Bill 1688, which goes into effect July 1, allows cars, vans and other first division vehicles to operate as school buses with a permit from the secretary of state. First division vehicles are classified as those designed to carry no more than 10 people total, according to the Illinois State Board of Education. Additionally, by Jan. 1, 2024, the secretary of state and Illinois State Board of Education would be required to create a course for individuals operating these vehicles as school buses. The course will be offered in conjunction with ISBE and the state's regional superintendents of schools.

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State Senator Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, a lead sponsor on the bill, said the law will help create additional resources for tourism promotion, while giving more control to business owners in the state. "Tourism Improvement Districts put business owners back in the driver's seat to direct marketing spending and spur growth," Feigenholtz said in a statement. "The additional revenues generated by these special districts will be one more tool businesses can use to draw visitors to all corners of the state."

In order to qualify, hotel owners must file a petition outlining a district plan including the boundaries of the proposed district, the length of the proposed term and a brief description of the proposed services and improvements they are requesting. They must also show they can pay more than half of the costs that will be taken on by the district. The post-pandemic measure is an attempt at spurring economic growth as local communities continue to bounce back from the effects of COVID-19. "The tourism and hospitality sector is the second-largest employer in Illinois," Feigenholtz said. "Tourism Improvement Districts will enable regions of our state to use this additional tool in an effort to recover from the pandemic and bring visitors back to Illinois."

Life sentence for those under 21 House Bill 1064, which takes effect Jan. 1, 2024, changes parole requirements for individuals convicted before they are 21 years old.

Under the new law, if those individuals are sentenced to a term of life in prison, they are eligible for a parole review after serving 40 or more years of their sentence. Cars and vans as school buses House Bill 1688, which goes into effect July 1, allows cars, vans and other first division vehicles to operate as school buses with a permit from the secretary of state. First division vehicles are classified as those designed to carry no more than 10 people total, according to the Illinois State Board of Education. Additionally, by Jan. 1, 2024, the secretary of state and Illinois State Board of Education would be required to create a course for individuals operating these vehicles as school buses. The course will be offered in conjunction with ISBE and the state's regional superintendents of schools.

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Fertilizer demand expected to grow this year

BY DANIEL GRANT
FARMWEEK
The supply of fertilizer is improving around the world following shocks to the system last year. And the timing of the buildup is critical as fertilizer demand is expected to grow this season, according to BK Morris, senior markets editor, fertilizers, for CRU Group. "The driver for prices will be from demand, not so much from supply," Morris told attendees of the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association's annual convention in Peoria. Fertilizer prices, of course, skyrocketed to historical highs last year as the war in Ukraine and a reduction of Chinese phosphate exports crippled



Photo by Illinois Farm Bureau photographer Catrina Rawson
A PREDICTED BOOST in corn acres this spring along with an 11% increase in winter wheat seedings could drive fertilizer demand.

the supply chain, along with numerous other factors. Morris looks for Russia to export around 2 million tons of nitrogen fertilizer this year, up from just 800,000 tons in 2022. He also looks for increased fertilizer exports from China, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, among other locations into the global market, which should ease the overall supply strain experienced last year. Elsewhere, new urea production is coming online in Nigeria. "A lot of countries are getting production back out in the global supply chain," Morris said. "Fertilizer affordability is improving," he noted. "But reluctance to pay high prices remains." Morris believes fertilizer prices will generally soften this year compared to last year, although high-priced inventory at some locations is slowing

the process. But price spikes are still expected to occur during the peak seasons this spring and fall, but likely nowhere near the same levels experienced in 2022. "Given where prices have been, there's a lot of room to go down," he said. "There's nothing to stop people from going back to normal production rates." Morris believes tight crop supplies and strong prices will incentivize farmers in the U.S., South America and elsewhere to plant more acres and try to maximize yields. CRU projects U.S. farmers could plant around 92.5 million acres of corn this spring, up from just 88.5 million in 2022. Soybean plantings this season could be similar to last year - 87.4 million acres. If realized, the boost in corn acres along with an 11% increase in winter wheat seedings could drive fertilizer demand.

"There's going to be a lot of crop production," Morris said. "We will see lower (fertilizer) prices, although there will be peak periods. Of all products, nitrogen has the most downside potential this year." Fertilizer prices in Illinois as of mid-January were steady for anhydrous ammonia (at a range of \$1,190 to \$1,490 per ton) and urea (at an average of \$710), according to the Illinois Production Cost Report. Average prices in the state declined from the previous two weeks for liquid nitrogen (to \$614 per ton), diammonium phosphate (\$831), monoammonium phosphate (\$852) and potash (\$714). This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.

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Courtesy photo by: Gary Channey

MIDWIN HORTICULTURIST Jennifer Durkin and Kala Soto Martinez take a close-up look at compass plant at the USDA Forest Service's Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Students can apply through March 14 to be part of the 2022 Youth Conservation Corps for eight weeks this summer at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

Midewin to host a summer youth employment program

High school students can apply through March 18 to be part of the 2023 Youth Conservation Corps for eight weeks this summer at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

The YCC team will assist with projects that are essential to restoring land where the Joliet Arsenal was active, including trails maintenance and invasive species management.

YCC is a national summer youth employment program that provides high school students with opportunities to explore career opportunities in natural resources. Students participate in work projects and learning opportunities.

YCC students earn minimum wage and will learn from the environment they will be working in as well as take part in various educational field trips.

"The Youth Conservation

Corps program is an excellent opportunity for young people to experience the great outdoors while learning and contributing to the goals and objectives to restore land, increase natural habitat for prairie species of all kinds and help enhance our recreational opportunities that are offered to the public," said Acting Prairie Supervisor Jim Seyler.

"We are excited about the 2023 season and the hope for a new team to be focused and engaged in rewarding and meaningful projects."

The 2023 YCC application form is available online at tinyurl.com/6rma6895.

Completed application forms can be emailed to SM.FS.Midewin_RSVP@usda.gov; or mailed to this address: USDA Forest Service, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, 30239 Highway 53, Wilmington, IL 60481.

Each student must also

provide a teacher letter of recommendation along with his or her application.

Eligibility requirements applicants must:

- Be at least 15 years of age at the start of enrollment and must not reach age 19 before completion of the program.
- Be a US citizen or permanent resident of the United States, its territories, or its possessions.
- Provide or be able to obtain a work permit as required under the laws of the applicant's home state.
- Provide a valid U.S. Social Security number or have applied for a valid Social Security number.
- Be able to fulfill the essential functions of the assigned work with or without a reasonable accommodation.
- Be actively committed and willing to complete the assigned work project.

Too much of a good thing

We've all taken acetaminophen from time to time. Medical experts say it's one of the best medications for treating pain and helping fight fever. But taking too much acetaminophen can lead to big trouble if you're not careful.

More than 600 products contain acetaminophen, including Tylenol, Benadryl, Robitussin, Sudafed, and TheraFlu, among others.

"It's one of the most common over-the-counter medications that's been marketed for years as one of the go-to meds when you're having discomfort," says Dr. Mirza Ali Khan, a family practice physician at OSF HealthCare. "That's why people are so familiar with it versus Advil and Ibuprofen, which is a whole different type of medication."

According to Dr. Khan, the recommended dosage for a healthy adult with normal liver function is 4,000 milligrams (mg) a day, which, for reference, is equal to eight Extra Strength Tylenol pills.

"Too much acetaminophen can be quite dangerous," he says. "It can affect the liver and that's why you want to be

careful. The signs include confusion, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and, if that's happening and you are taking acetaminophen, you need to be seen urgently rather than waiting."

According to the National Institute of Health, 56,000 people visit the ER every year due to acetaminophen toxicity and 500 will die.

A Kansas City woman recently made headlines when she experienced stomach pain and began taking Tylenol daily for weeks. She became sicker and was rushed to the emergency room where she eventually fell into a coma. The 29-year-old woman had acetaminophen poisoning and ultimately needed a liver transplant. After a difficult year-long recovery, she's back to work and slowly returning to her normal lifestyle.

"What I always tell my patients is no matter what you ingest - food or medicine - there are two ways it's going to get through your body," says Dr. Khan. "It's going to go through the kidneys or the liver. Taking too much acetaminophen can cause the liver to malfunction where it does-

n't work and that can cause toxicity."

Call 911 immediately if the person suspected to have taken an overdose of acetaminophen is unconscious, semiconscious or not breathing. Dr. Khan says if someone is experiencing severe symptoms, such as confusion or abdominal pain, they should get to the hospital within 24 hours. The treatment plan includes N-acetylcysteine (NAC), which is an antidote for toxic acetaminophen overdose and is usually given by mouth.

"The bottom line is acetaminophen is a good medicine," Dr. Khan says. "Obviously, if you're taking one or two once in a while that's okay, but if you're using it consistently it's good to check with your primary care. Say 'I've been taking so many daily. Is this safe for me to do or is there something else I should be doing?'"



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OBITUARIES

Hilda Vandegraff

WILMINGTON—Hilda Vandegraff, 72, of Wilmington, passed away unexpectedly on Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 at Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee. Born April 17, 1950 in Savannah, GA, Hilda Ann was a daughter of Herbert Lloyd and Julia Ruth (Hammond) Turner. She was raised and educated in Savannah; graduated from Herschel V. Jenkins High School with the class of 1967 and went on to earn her Associates in Nursing in 1969 from Armstrong State College School of Nursing. On Aug. 2, 1970, Hilda married Robert Vandegraff in Savannah, and together they resided in Charleston, IL; Lockport, IL and in Resthaven, IL before settling to Wilmington, where they established in their current home.

Hilda's career was in healthcare, and over the years she held employment with Charleston Hospital, Sunny Hill Nursing Home in Joliet and Royal Willow Nursing Home in Wilmington. Most recently, Hilda worked as an Agency Nurse, as well as in the Private Duty Sector before formally retiring. Hilda was a member of the First United Methodist Church in Wilmington, as well as the Wilmington Garden Club, which she was very active in over the years, serving as president. She enjoyed being part of many community activities which included the Garden Club, Christmas Home Tours and Pairs and Spares. Hilda was proud to have hosted Wilmington's only Southern Cotillion in the family's back yard, where everyone had a ball, and in her younger years she took pleasure in boating, water skiing, camping, and being active in her church and community. She was talented not only in the garden, but also in sewing and quilting. Hilda recently found herself entrenched watching Blue Bloods and Yellowstone, but her primary focus always remained centered on family and the time she was able to spend with her loved ones.

It was apparent that Hilda had an eye for beauty and loved all things flowers. She also had a passion for butterflies as they were a reminder of rebirth, no different than being saved when we are reborn through Christ. Hilda Ann Vandegraff may be gone from our sight, but she leaves a priceless collection of memories, and will continue to live on in the hearts of those



who knew and loved her.

Survivors include her husband of 52 years, James "Robert" Vandegraff; three children: Angela (Michael) McFarland, of Gulf Shores, AL; Wade (Candice Thomas) Vandegraff, of Fairbury, IL and Laura (Jason) Stava, of Temecula, CA; five grandchildren: Colton (Brooke) Wollenzien, of Chebanse, IL; Nicholas Stava, of Temecula, CA; William McFarland, of Gulf Shores; Thomas Vandegraff, of Fairbury and Victoria McFarland, of Gulf Shores; two sisters, Cheryl (David) Smith, of Richmond Hill, GA and Melanie Turner, of Savannah, GA; one brother, Charles (Dana) Turner, of Andersonville, TN; brother-in-law, Richard Vandegraff, of Gladstone, OR and one sister-in-law, Dolores Vandegraff, of Custer, WA; numerous cousins and several nieces and nephews, including Porter Turner, of Andersonville, TN.

Hilda was preceded in death by her parents, Herbert and Julia Ruth Turner; father-in-law and mother-in-law, Thomas and Alice Harris; nephew, Robert Vandegraff; brother-in-law, Donald Vandegraff and sister-in-law, Mary Vandegraff.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd. in Wilmington on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023 from 11 a.m. until time of funeral service at 1 p.m. Pastor Harriette Cross from the First United Methodist Church in Wilmington will officiate, and burial will follow in Oakwood Cemetery in Wilmington.

Pallbearers will be: Colton Wollenzien, Nicholas Stava, William McFarland, Thomas Vandegraff, Jason Stava and Michael McFarland.

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

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

Funeral services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Baskerville Funeral Home in Wilmington.

Alene Kitchell

GROVE, OK—Virginia Alene (House) Kitchell, 98, of Grove, VA, passed away on Friday, Jan. 27, 2023.

She was born in Indian Territory in the community of Winganon, OK on June 18, 1924 to Robert and Jewel Elizabeth (Galloway) House. Alene was raised and educated in Alluwe and graduated from Alluwe Public Schools. Following graduation Alene continued her education by attending business college in Bartlesville. On July 13, 1942 Alene married the love of her life, Johnny W. Kitchell, in Nowata, OK. Their union was gifted with five children: Johnna, Marilyn, Ann, Mary Beth and Tony. Alene helped provide for her family working in two government offices in Illinois and Oklahoma. She then went to work for the Wilmington School District where she retired.

A loving wife, mother and grandmother, Alene had a wide variety of interests and hobbies. She enjoyed traveling and especially when it involved a river cruise. Alene was an avid vegetable gardener and it was through those efforts that her family had fresh canned vegetables year-round. According to her son, Tony, even in her 80's if he did not get there to till the garden, Alene would get out there and get it done herself. Crafts were another interest that gave her countless hours of enjoyment.

Involved in several different clubs and organizations throughout her life; it was through the Eastern Stars, Daughters of the American Revolution, Cattlewomen's group, Red Hats Society, and the Pocahontas Club that Alene made many life-long friends. She was



also faithful in supporting the local Senior Citizens Center whether it be in Bartlesville or Chelsea. Once again always enjoying the company of others. No story about Alene would be complete unless you mentioned her life-long membership at Hillside Christian Church in Nowata. She was not only a very faithful member, but one that was ready to serve and help wherever she was needed.

Alene has left a legacy that will live on in the lives of her family and friends. She is survived by her children: Marilyn (Alan) Daily, Mary Beth (Jim) Williams and Tony (Cynthia) Kitchell; 10 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren; sister, Mary Jane DeLozier and numerous nieces and nephews.

Alene was preceded in death by her husband, Johnny W. Kitchell; two daughters, Johnna Mason and Ann Ranea Skeldon; parents, Elizabeth and Robert House; three brothers: Clifford, Carl and Johnny House; one sister, Betty (House) Lewis; grandsons, Jason Williams and Michael Daily and son-in-law, Fred Mason.

Services to remember and celebrate the life of V. Alene (House) Kitchell will be 10 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 18, 2023 at Hillside Christian Church in Nowata. Burial will follow in the Chelsea Cemetery, where Alene will be laid to rest beside her husband. Visitation will be Friday, at the funeral home, from 3-7 p.m., with family there to receive visitors from 5-7 p.m.

Please view and sign Alene's online tribute at www.delozierfuneralservice.com.

Michael R. Johnstone

WILMINGTON—Michael R. Johnstone, 59, of Wilmington, formerly of West Chicago, IL, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023 at Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital in Winfield, IL.

Born Oct. 3, 1963 in Evergreen Park, IL, Michael was raised in Winfield and graduated from West Chicago High School. He worked for Armbrust Paper Tubes, Inc. for over 25 years where he would become president of the company. Mike was proud to work for his family's business and loved working alongside his mother until she passed away in 2006. In his free time, he liked going for rides on his Kawasaki motorcycle, and he loved music, particularly talented guitarists such as Stevie Ray Vaughn and Eric Clapton to name a few. Mike had a great sense of humor and loved telling jokes, even if he had told you the same joke countless times. He was a gentle, kind, compassionate man, who was an outstanding father and who cherished his granddaughter.

Survivors include his wife of 34 years,



Stacey Johnstone; three children: Nicholas Johnstone (Katy Wheeler), of Channahon; Garrett (Kelly) Johnstone, of Camden, TN and Katherine Johnstone, of Bradley; one granddaughter, Kaya Johnstone; one sister and two brothers: Linda Johnstone, of Carol Stream; Mark (Kim) Johnstone, of Freeport, IL and Jim (Denice) Johnstone, of Portland, OR; and several nieces and nephews.

Mike was preceded in death by his parents, Dorothee and Gordon Johnstone.

Per Mike's wishes, cremation rites were accorded, and the family will receive friends for a celebration of life on Sunday, Feb. 19, 2023 at Hog Wild Express, 551 W. Kennedy Rd., in Braidwood from 12-4 p.m.

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

Cremation rites and memorial arrangements are being made under the direction and care of Baskerville Funeral Home in Wilmington.

Eligible senior citizens can take advantage of tax deferral program

The Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) reminded senior citizens about the availability of the Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral Program which allows qualified seniors to defer all or part of their property taxes and special assessment payments on their principal residences.

Seniors needing assistance paying their property taxes have until March 1, 2023 to apply for the program.

The program, which works like a loan, allows qualified seniors to defer a maximum of \$7,500 per tax year (including both first and second installment payments), increased from \$5,000 last year. Deferred amounts are borrowed from the state, who pays the tax bill to the County Collector's Office. The program was also expanded this year to increase the household income threshold qualification from \$55,000 to \$65,000.

Interest on the amount paid by the state accumulates and a lien is placed on the

property for all deferred tax payments and interest, payable upon death of the homeowner, at the time the home is transferred to a new owner, or sooner, if the program participant chooses to pay off the deferred tax payments and interest.

"We encourage all eligible seniors who need help in paying their property taxes to look into this program and apply by the March 1 deadline," said Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) Director David Harris. "Not only has the income threshold been increased this year but the program has also been expanded to allow seniors to defer a greater amount of their property tax payments."

To qualify for the Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral, a property owner must:

- be 65 years of age or older prior to June 1 of the year that the application is being filed with the County Collector's Office,

• have a total annual household income of no more than \$65,000,

• have owned and occupied the property or other qualifying residence for at least the last three years,

• own the property, or share joint ownership with a spouse, or be the sole beneficiary, or the property owner and spouse be the sole beneficiaries of an Illinois land trust,

• have no unpaid property taxes and special assessments on the property, and

• have adequate insurance against fire or casualty loss.

To apply for the program, seniors need to contact their local County Collector's Office to receive an application. Once completed, the application must be filed with the Collector's Office on or before March 1 of each year they wish to defer their property taxes or special assessments.

For general questions visit IDOR's website at tax.illinois.gov or contact their local County Collector's Office.

Drop in gas price may be short-lived

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have fallen 7.9 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.51/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

"For a second straight week, the national average price of gasoline has declined, alongside the price of diesel which has fallen to its lowest level in nearly a year," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"While diesel prices likely have a long way to fall as inventories continue to improve, gasoline prices in some areas have gone up in the last weeks as the transition to summer gasoline is just around the corner. In addition, GasBuddy data shows that gasoline demand has risen for the third straight week, a trend that will likely continue as we gradually see temperatures warm and the heart of winter

moves to the rear view.

Prices in Illinois are 2.4 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 15.5 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

Area prices on Monday include \$3.17/g at the Mohsen station on Lorenza Road, Wilmington, \$3.31/g in Braidwood, \$3.41/g in Wilmington and \$3.68/g in Coal City.

The lowest price in the state was \$3.07/g while the highest was \$4.79/g, a difference of \$1.72/g.

"Refinery maintenance season will soon be in full force, likely putting upward pressure on prices. On average, gasoline prices rise between 35 and 85 cents per gallon between March and Memorial Day, so motorists seeing prices fall should enjoy the declines while they last."

Push for Illinois child tax credit begins

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD – A group of Democratic lawmakers on Feb. 7 called for creating a state-level child tax credit that would give low- and middle income families up to \$700 per child each year in tax relief.

But whether Gov. JB Pritzker includes such a plan in his budget proposal, scheduled to be delivered Feb. 15 – and whether it receives the endorsement of top Democratic leaders in the General Assembly – remains an open question.

Erion Malasi, director of policy and advocacy at the advocacy group Economic Security for Illinois, pegged the plan's cost at somewhere between \$700 million and \$800 million annually.

State Senator Mike Simmons, D-Chicago, said passage of such a measure would benefit about half of all children in Illinois.

"It puts money in the pockets of struggling moms and dads all across the state," he said during a Statehouse news conference. "And when we put money in the pockets of those working parents, we know that they can't afford to save so they're going to go out and spend that money on shoes for their kids, on health care that they've put off for too long, on food for their teenagers who love to eat."

Illinois already offers an earned income tax credit, or EITC, which is available to people who meet certain income guidelines, even if they have no children. A child tax credit would be an additional payment to parents. Like the EITC, the child tax credit would be refundable, meaning if the amount of the credit exceeds the filer's total tax liability, the excess amount would be repaid to the taxpayer.

The language of the proposal is contained

in Senate Bill 1444, which Simmons introduced Tuesday. Under the legislation, individuals with income below \$50,000 and married couples filing jointly with incomes below \$75,000 would be eligible for a \$700-per-child tax credit.

For tax filers with incomes above those limits, the amount of the credit would be reduced by \$24 for each \$1,000 of additional income.

Simmons was joined at the news conference by other supporters of the idea, including Senator Robert Peters, also a Chicago Democrat, whose district, he said, includes some of the wealthiest, and some of the poorest, ZIP codes in Illinois.

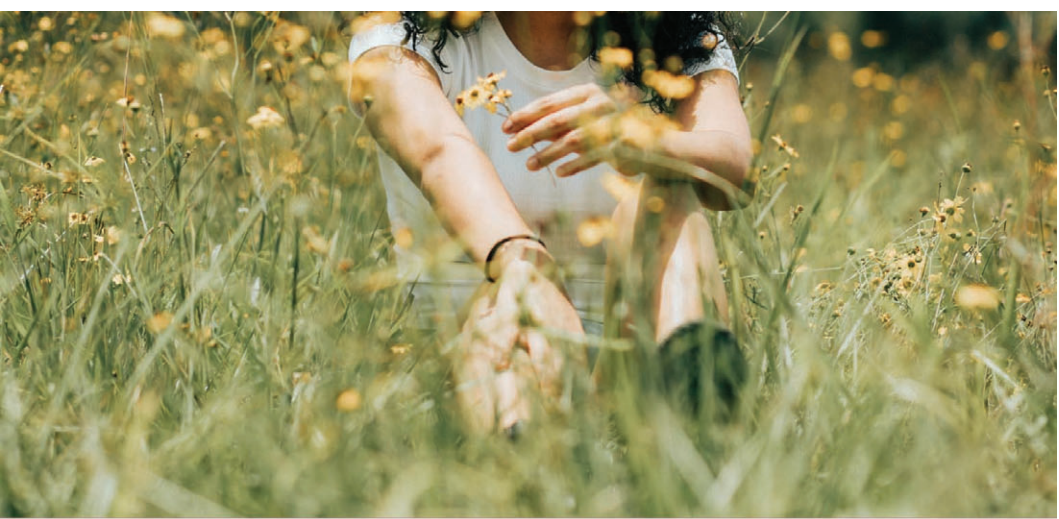
"No ZIP code should have that level of inequality," he said. "This is a step for us to move away from income inequality and to something that says equity and equality itself is a necessary part of life."

But the idea comes at a precarious time for Illinois, and it could face resistance due to its estimated annual price tag.

Although the state has been running multi-billion dollar surpluses in each of the last two years, the Governor's Office of Management and Budget has projected that state finances could start running deficits as soon as Fiscal Year 2025.

Meanwhile, Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza has cautioned lawmakers not to use the current surpluses to enact new, permanent programs that would obligate the state to fund long into the future.

"What I would be opposed to is seeing new funding items – unless you can really sell that this is an extreme necessity for the state at this time – we want to stay away from funding new programs that are going to have to be funded year to year," she told Capitol News Illinois during an interview in January.



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SNAP benefits will be reduced to pre-pandemic levels March 1

BY ZETA CROSS
THE CENTER SQUARE

Food pantries are bracing to feed more hungry people in Illinois.

In March, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program card holders in Illinois will see reductions of \$55 to \$250 per person, said Man-Yee Lee, spokesperson for the Greater Chicago Food Depository.

The Greater Chicago Food Depository is a food bank that supplies food to more than 700 local food pantries. Two million people in one million Illinois households currently receive SNAP benefits.

In April 2020, after the COVID-19 pandemic emergency was declared, the federal government added bonus dollars to SNAP cards, the taxpayer-funded cash cards that people of certain income levels use to buy groceries. In March, the federal government will return the subsidies to pre-pandemic amounts.

"Many people may not be following what Congress is doing and they may not know that these changes are happening," Lee told The Center Square. "At a time when food prices remain high, we are

really worried that this reduction in benefits will take people by surprise."

One in five households in the region struggles to put food on the table, Lee said.

"The hunger crisis preceded the pandemic," Lee said. "Inflation has only made it worse."

The exact size of the benefit decrease that each household will experience in March will vary greatly, depending on income and household size, Lee said. People with little to no net income will see the smallest reduction. The average one-person recipient will see a reduction of \$86 a month, Lee said.

The Greater Chicago Food Depository encourages people to check their accounts at the Application for Benefits Eligible website. Follow the links at chicagosfoodbank.org/snap for more information.

If circumstances in the household have changed, the household may qualify for increased benefits. Among the circumstances that could allow for more benefits are if more people are now living in the home, if the household income has gone down, hous-

ing, medical or child care expenses have gone up, or if a person in the household is paying child care expenses for a child who lives elsewhere.

This winter, inflation has sent more people to food pantries and meal programs, Lee said. For months now, the food depository has been buying more food to keep up with increased demand.

Generous donors in the private sector do supply some food, but much of the food is bought directly by the food depository, Lee said.

"People do not realize that the food depository continues to purchase much of the food that it distributes," she said.

In recent months, the depository has doubled what it spends on the food that it supplies to its food bank partners, Lee said.

"This is something that we have been addressing for quite a while now and we are very concerned," she said. "A recent consumer price index showed that prices are stabilizing - except food prices."

Come March, when SNAP payments are reduced, Lee expects even more people to turn to food pantries to put food on the table.

Annual FUMC Men's Club spaghetti dinner March 4

The Men's Club of the First United Methodist Church of Wilmington will be hosting its 37th annual spaghetti dinner on Saturday, March 4, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the church located at 401 E. Kahler Road, Wilmington.

Come for the spaghetti, stay for the desserts! Carry-outs available. Invite your neighbors—better yet, pick them up! Free will offering, no set price.

Proceeds from this event are used to support local missions such as Kuzma Care Cottage, Our Caring Closet, Lamb's Fold and the Christian Help Association.

Illinois CPA Society opens accounting scholarship application window

The Illinois CPA Society and CPA Endowment Fund of Illinois are excited to announce applications are now being accepted for more than 40 scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000 each that will be awarded for the 2023-2024 academic year.

These scholarships provide essential financial assistance to qualifying accounting students across the state of Illinois and reward them for their hard work and academic success. Applicants must be

junior, senior, or graduate-level accounting students enrolled at Illinois colleges or universities who demonstrate financial need, academic achievement, and leadership qualities.

There is just one application to submit for any or all scholarships for which the student is eligible. The application deadline for the following scholarships is April 1, 2023:

For more scholarship information visit www.icpas.org/scholarships.

Advocacy groups pushing for expansive paid family, medical leave in Illinois

BY HANNAH MEISEL
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD—A coalition of advocacy and labor groups is pushing for a state law to give Illinois workers 26 weeks of paid leave if they need to recover from an illness, domestic or sexual violence, or take care of a sick family member or new child.

The coalition's initial proposal—encapsulated in Senate Bill 1234 and House Bill 1530—would cover all employees in Illinois and all employees who earn at least \$1,600 annually. Paid leave would also apply to contract workers.

The benefits to workers would be paid out of a newly created special state fund. The law would require employers

to pay 0.73% of the wages for their employees and contractors into the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Fund, similar to the state's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. An additional fee of up to 0.05% could be imposed through administrative rules for administering the program.

Those who need paid leave would be required to provide documentation of pregnancy, adoption or guardianship of a new child, their own injury or illness, or that of a sick family member. The leave policy would also cover military-related time off and time needed to recover from sexual assault or domestic violence.

Those workers, if approved for leave, would

receive 90% of their average weekly wages for their leave period, up to a maximum of \$1,200 per week. Eventually that maximum would be adjusted to 90% of the average weekly wage in Illinois.

Those potential payouts are in line with the policies of the 11 other states with paid leave laws, although no other state's law is quite as permissive as the proposal being pushed in Illinois.

But business groups aren't engaging with the proposal yet. Rob Karr, president and CEO of the influential Illinois Retail Merchants Association, turned the focus back to last month's legislative agreement to created five days of paid leave after years of negotiation.

Mount Olivet Cemetery clean-up

Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Wilmington is planning a Spring clean-up March 3 (weather permitting). All decorations wanting to be kept must be removed at that time.

When decorating, please remember the following rules: Trees, shrubs, fence borders of any kind are not allowed and will be removed.

The purpose of the new section being all flush markers is to remove difficulties with maintenance and burials. All statues, figurines, etc., are not allowed in any section of the cemetery.

Anything not removed by the end of clean-up, will be removed and disposed of by the cemetery employees.

When clean-up has commenced, shepherds hooks only one per grave, can be placed.

Remember to remove them by Nov. 1. Plastic flowers must be in a ground vase and no flower pots. For a complete list of decorating rules and regulations, please contact the St. Rose Parish Office.

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Tough decisions needed with fewer federal dollars

The legislature's Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability released its latest monthly fiscal report last week. The report claimed the state is still on track to match the commission's revised November estimate of a \$4.1 billion revenue increase for the current fiscal year.

Revenue had originally been projected to fall from the previous fiscal year. And much of the recently projected increase is believed to be a one-time event and has so far been treated as such.

But revenue projections have become so unreliably squirrely that groups which rely on state funding are starting to push to get their fair share of what they see as a fast-growing pie. Take a look at Medicaid, an always complicated and expensive topic that will become much more so in the coming months.

More than 300,000 Illinoisans risk losing Medicaid coverage at the end of March. There are those who believe that many of those folks are already back on employer healthcare coverage (or should be). States haven't been required to conduct redeterminations on Medicaid recipients during the pandemic, and that process will restart soon.



CAPITOL FACTS
Rich Miller

While the state could save money with fewer Medicaid recipients, states are also losing part of their federal Medicaid matching dollars that had been increased during the pandemic. The federal government has increased matching rates during past economic downturns, but it's never easy to adjust to a decrease, particularly when states have received so much extra for so long.

Hospitals were hit hard by the pandemic. They lost the ability to offer revenue-producing services during the closures, and the deadly viral waves that followed decimated their workforce, with illness, deaths and burnout.

When that federal Medicaid match falls, hospitals will undoubtedly feel an even greater pinch. Hospital closures are already a national problem, and it could get even worse as the financial pressure increases.

In the past, hospitals were pushed to increase their self-assessments, which injected more money into the Medicaid system and produced more matching federal funds. But hospitals say the state is cash-flush enough to provide more money on its own. And, like I noted above, there's very little trust in budget projections. If the projection is flat or less, it'll

be met with widespread skepticism. And many are now eyeing the state's new \$1 billion rainy day fund.

But the problems don't end there. The state has allowed out of state and retired nurses to practice here during the pandemic, and those emergency rules will disappear in May, when the governor's pandemic executive orders expire.

The Illinois Hospital Association estimates 15,000 of those nurses are working here right now, many of whom are well-paid traveling nurses. While the travel nurses are straining hospital budgets, the workforce situation is such that the sudden loss of that many nurses could shock the entire system and create huge additional costs. The hospitals have been trying for years to enroll the state in an interstate nursing compact to allow non-Illinois nurses to practice here, but that has always been thwarted by unions.

The governor has already said he wants to greatly expand preschool and childcare programs and make college tuition "free for every working-class family." All of that will cost money, and hospitals are just one group which will be pounding at the door.

Hospitals are the largest employers in most Downstate and even some suburban legislative districts. And even if they aren't the largest employers, their boards are usually populated

with the most influential business leaders in the region. It's very hard to ignore them.

Meanwhile, after forcefully opposing a graduated income tax in 2020, the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago is now proposing a 10-year, personal and corporate state income tax "surcharge" of 0.5 percent and 0.7 percent, respectively, regardless of income.

None of the \$2.9 billion raised by the tax hike could be spent on social services or other budget priorities. Instead, all the money would be sent to the pension funds and the rainy day fund.

The group also says the state should implement mostly unspecified "cost disciplines" to help pay for the plan. It suggests an example of slicing agency spending by 2-3 percent as a start. It also suggests eliminating the estate tax on assets above \$4 million, the current state trigger. They should've left that one out because it's a bad look, to say the least.

Widening the revenue base while narrowing the spending base makes fiscal sense on paper. But the report ignores the decades of all too real state underfunding of services for people with dire needs.

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

Workforce shortage remains key concern for transportation sector

BY DANIEL GRANT
FARMWEEK

The shortage of truck drivers has eased slightly across the nation compared to 2021.

But the workforce shortage remains a top concern of the transportation sector for 2023, according to a panel of industry experts on at the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association (IFCA) annual convention in Peoria.

"From the things we see in 2023, the focus has to be on the workforce. It's the No. 1 thing we're hearing in the sector," said Kirby Wagner, GROWMARK associate manager of government relations.

"We have a tight supply chain on top of that," he noted. "It will continue."

The American Trucking Associations (ATA) estimates the U.S. was short about 78,000 truck drivers last year, down from a high of 80,000 in 2021.

"We saw a lot of retirements in the trucking industry and a lot of overworked driv-

ers," Wagner said. Some drivers returned to the industry and freight demand declined slightly in recent months, which eased some of the strain.

ATA's truck tonnage index decreased 2.5% in November after slipping 1.2% in October. The decrease reflects a slowing goods economy with housing-related freight particularly weak, ATA reported.

Looking ahead, Wagner said GROWMARK continues to work with new truck drivers to get them through an expanded training and regulatory environment. Meanwhile, IFCA is pursuing an extension of restricted Class B licenses to allow the transport of up to 3,000 pounds of all farm products, and not just liquid fertilizer, to help expand the pool of drivers in the ag industry, according to KJ Johnson, IFCA president.

"There'll be more collaboration across all sectors to make sure farmers get all the products they need on time," Wagner said.

Elsewhere, workforce

constraints played a big role in efficiency concerns for the railroad industry in the past year, according to Peter Skosey, executive director, state government affairs for BNSF Railway.

"Our workforce is strained," said Skosey, who hopes to see new hires after the industry narrowly avoided a labor strike. "We just finished a difficult round of labor negotiations. The December agreement gives workers a 24% pay increase."

Issues about paid sick leave for workers was a key sticking point in the railroad negotiations, but often misunderstood outside the industry, according to the BNSF representative.

"We don't have paid sick leave, but we have time off. The average employee gets 27 to 33 days off a year," Skosey said. "And, we do have long-term sick leave."

With a new labor agreement in place, Skosey looks for rail service disruptions to ease this year. The company offers sign-on bonuses as high as

\$25,000 for conductors and engineers.

"I think we'll still see some ripple effects (from recent service disruptions), but our network is back to fluidity," he said.

BNSF also spends more than \$3 billion annually to maintain its network.

"We are concerned about efficiency, but we also have the luxury of investing in infrastructure," Skosey added. "We've been able to decrease rail service disruptions by 30% the last 10 years."

"Further opportunities for technological upgrades in the railroad industry and operational improvements will also reduce service disruptions."

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

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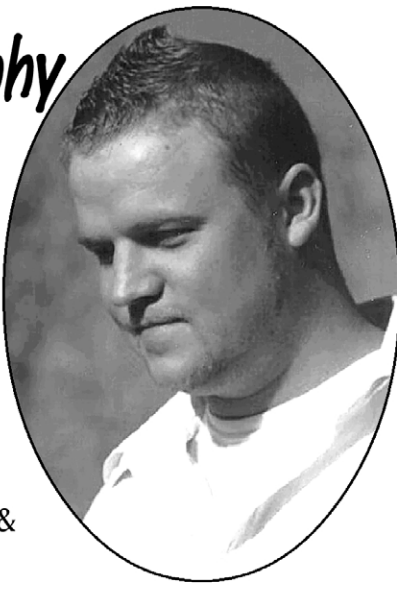
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Thank you

The family of Melvin Smith would like to thank everyone for the cards, flowers, monetary donations, food and other expressions of condolences during and after his passing. Your thoughtfulness was greatly appreciated. Thanks also to Morris Hospital ICU, Second Floor East Nurses and Dr. Daniel Jurak for their compassionate care. Thank you to Rev. Josh Miller and Deacon William Dunn of Assumption Parish for their beautiful words of kindness at this sad time. We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to Matt Baskerville and Staff from Reeves Baskerville Funeral Home who went above and beyond expectations to make sure everything was perfect.

Sincerely, The Smith Family
Elaine, Greg, Janet & family,
Mike, Faith and girls,
Chris and Lanie

How tire waste is bad for the environment

EARTH TALK

Questions & Answers About Our Environment

Dear EarthTalk: What happens to all the rubber waste that wears off tires as cars and trucks roll down the road? Is it bad for the environment?

-- Jack C., Marion, OH
Most people have heard of exhaust emissions, but there is another form of emissions released by vehicles known as non-exhaust emissions (NEEs).

According to independent testing and data firm Emissions Analytics, they can be as much as 1,000 times worse for the environment. NEEs are defined as "particles released into the air from brake wear, tyre wear, road surface wear and resuspension of road dust during on-road vehicle usage."

Unfortunately, NEEs account for most of the primary particulate matter released by road vehicles on a daily basis.

In total, more than 1.5 million metric tons of tire-wear particles are lost to the environment each year, equivalent to 30 percent of the weight of every tire used in the U.S. NEEs constitute as much as 60 percent of the particles that are less than 2.5 micrometers in size (PM2.5) and 73 percent of those that are less than 10 micrometers in size (PM10), making them one of the greatest vehicular threats to nature.

This is only further exacerbated by the growing electric-vehicle industry, as EV's weigh significantly more due to their batteries and also have



TIRE PARTICLES & other non-exhaust emissions constitute the majority of fine particulate emissions as a result of auto travel on U.S. roads.

a higher torque output. Putting these two characteristics together, tires used on an EV will inevitably wear out faster.

According to Scott Clark, Michelin executive vice president for automotive, motorsport experiences and Americas Regions, the difference in tire life-span can be as much as 20 percent less for an EV compared to an internal combustion engine vehicle.

As for the effects that NEEs have on the environment, the data is unsettling to say the least.

In a study on estuary ecosystems led by post-doctoral scholar Samreen Siddiqui, it was found that Inland Silverside and mysid shrimp, when exposed to tire particulates and a resultant pollutant known as leachate (a mix of chemicals that are released by tire particulates)

had a number of problems, including significantly altered swimming behaviors and reduced growth.

In a similar study led by graduate student Brittany Cunningham, a freshwater ecosystem was exposed to tire particulates and leachates.

The organisms in question—embryonic zebrafish and the crustacean Daphnia magna—experienced mortality and developmental abnormalities as a result of the exposure.

Leachate was considered the main driver of toxicity in both organisms, with the particles themselves enhancing the toxicity in comparison to the leachate alone.

The researchers recommended some innovative solutions to preventing tire-wear exposure, including rain gardens on the sides of roads to

capture tire particulates, as well as more durable tires, incentivizing greener transit alternatives, and something known as particle capture devices.

The Tyre Collective, a research group that produces sustainable devices for tire-particulate removal, invented a device that is capable of capturing the particulates themselves.

Since the particulates become positively charged when released due to friction, the device uses electrostatic plates to capture as much as 60 percent of the particles released, preventing them from ever entering the environment!

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Survey pushes for greater focus on teacher recruitment and retention amid shortages

BY NIKA SCHOONOVER
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois schools are still grappling with a teacher shortage that seems to be getting worse, a recent survey by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools shows.

This mirrors the state's own data, which shows Illinois' teacher shortage is at the highest level in the last five years. More than 5,300 classroom positions, including administrative and support personnel, went unfilled in 2022, according to the Illinois State Board of Education.

As a result, teachers often have to absorb unsupervised students into their existing classes or fill in for subject areas in which they have no background.

"No matter how much we're trying, we're not filling all the positions and the ones we are filling are people who aren't necessarily qualified to teach what their assignment is," IARSS President Mark Klaisner said in a recent interview.

The IARSS, a trade group for the public officials who serve as an intermediary between local school districts and the Illinois State Board of Education, has surveyed nearly 700 school districts on the state of the teacher shortage crisis for the past six years. But this year's survey focused more intently on short- and long-term solutions proposed by school districts statewide.

According to their 2022 survey, 68% of districts reported

fewer teacher applicants than the year before. And 45% of districts reported the shortage in their school had worsened from the year prior.

Klaisner said everyone involved in education needs to be heard when considering policy changes, as problems with teacher recruitment and retention have different causal mixes in different parts of the state.

"There are lots of people working on how to come to solutions," he said. "Some of it is related to money but a lot is related to reestablishing the teaching profession and, whatever that takes, we need to work with higher ed, we need to work with early childhood and everywhere in between."

One area of focus, Klaisner said, is improving the pipeline between education institutions and Illinois' K-12 schools by starting educator recruitment earlier. That could include programs that allow middle schoolers to shadow teachers.

Other policy recommendations in the IARSS report include making college more affordable for prospective educators and increasing the pool of substitute teachers.

Improving the pipeline
The report emphasized the importance of making the teaching profession more desirable for prospective educators, outlining policy recommendations that would lessen financial burdens and encourage greater diversity.

Along with job shadowing programs, he advocated for dual credit programs that

allow students to earn some college credit while in high school.

"We need to look for expedited routes that are going to be less expensive," Klaisner said.

The report also calls for direct state funding to key areas to encourage more diversity within the profession. This includes increasing funding from \$4.2 million to \$7 million annually for the Minority Teachers of Illinois scholarship; investing more money into the Illinois Teachers Loan Repayment Program which helps pay down student loan debt for Illinois college students that qualify to teach in low-income areas; and further increasing the state's Monetary Award Program by \$50 million.

Those MAP grants go to eligible college students and do not need to be repaid. While the program's funding has grown to \$601 million from about \$400 million in the past four years, the report suggested increasing it by \$50 million will ensure more teachers from minority communities will receive the grants.

To better fill gaps in the short term, Klaisner pointed to incentivizing teachers to complete additional subject endorsements, which can be done through the ISBE website.

"If you've got a good teacher who's willing to try something new, give them the appropriate endorsement, but then give them three years to be able to complete the coursework to be fully certified in that area," Klaisner said.

By giving teachers the time and space to complete supplemental endorsements, Klaisner said it will better equip them to fill in potential staffing gaps.

Other recommendations include observing how districts have used federal pandemic-era Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, or ESSER, funds to help teachers get provisional licenses in shortage subject areas. Additionally, the survey recommends strengthening

the state's educator prep programs by showing which paths have stronger results in teacher placement and success.

Several survey respondents also noted that a 2010 state law creating a lower tier of pension benefits for new employees has made the teaching profession less desirable from a compensation standpoint.

Increasing substitute teacher accessibility

When it comes to filling short-term gaps, the report focused on increasing the pool of substitute teachers.

"When you don't have enough classroom teachers, and then you don't have enough subs, then you've got classrooms that are literally empty. I mean, the children are in the room but there's no teacher," said Representative Sue Scherer, D-Decatur, who was also a teacher for 34 years in Decatur and Maroa-Forsyth.

Last April, Gov. JB Pritzker signed a package of four bills to address the shortage, including House Bill 4798, which allows currently enrolled teaching students with at least 90 credit hours to be licensed as substitute teachers.

According to the survey, 60% of respondents said HB 4798 has helped recruit and retain teachers.

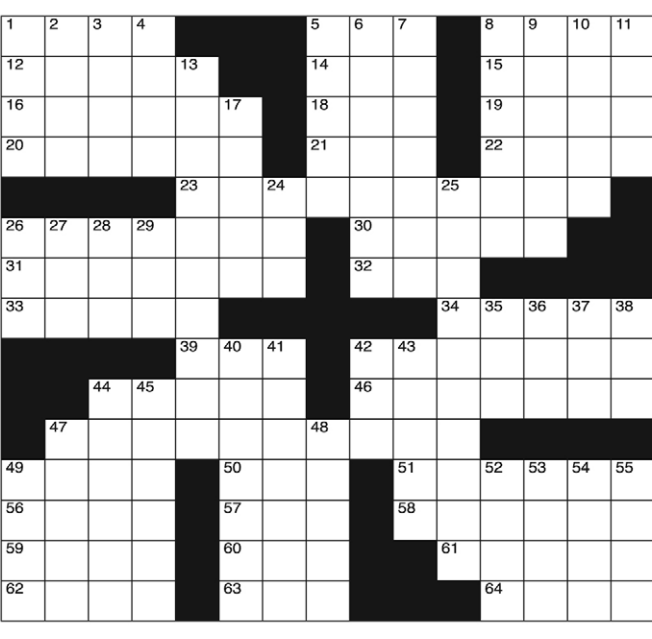
In addition, 80% of districts support a plan which would increase the number of days retired teachers can substitute from 120 days to 140 days without impacting their retirement benefits.

The number was increased to 120 from 90 in a bill signed in April, Senate Bill 3893, but it was scheduled to expire in 2023. The idea was supported by 79 percent of IARSS survey respondents, and the report advocated for making the extension permanent.

The laws allowing college students to serve as substitute teachers is also scheduled to expire, and the report suggested making it permanent as well.

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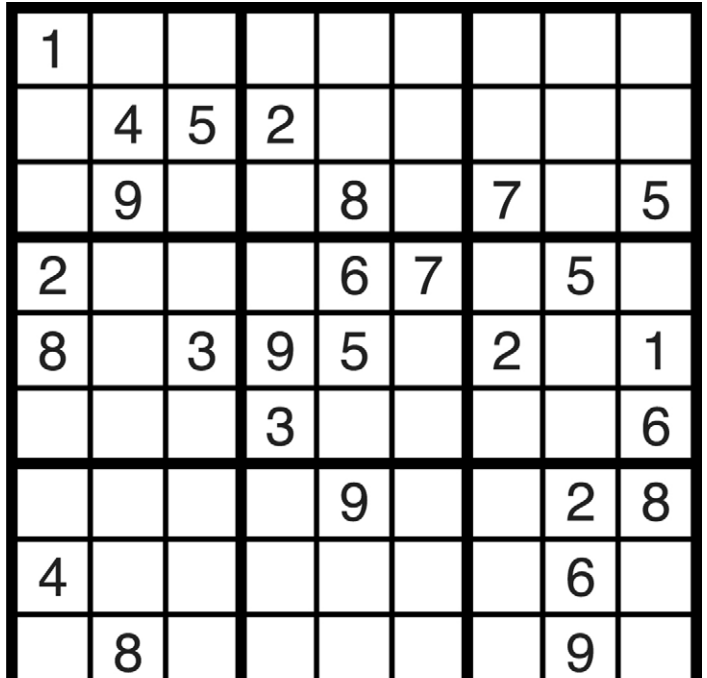


CLUES ACROSS

- 1. River in Tuscany
- 5. A way to represent
- 8. Rocker's guitar
- 12. Civil Rights group
- 14. Brew
- 15. Scratch
- 16. W. Asian country
- 18. The Eye Network
- 19. Clarified butter
- 20. Part of the Cascade Range
- 21. Downwind
- 22. A way to steer
- 23. Loop
- 26. Not ingested
- 30. Swampy coniferous forest
- 31. Musician
- 32. Signing
- 33. Containing iron
- 34. Part of a theorem or proof
- 39. Veterans battleground (slang)
- 42. Of enormous proportions
- 44. Italian city
- 46. Come before
- 47. Balm
- 49. Undergarments
- 50. Male parent
- 51. Ropes
- 56. Ear part
- 57. Investment vehicle
- 58. Dictator
- 59. Cain and ___
- 60. A type of code
- 61. Border river along India and Nepal
- 62. It's what's for dinner
- 63. Consume
- 64. Christian __, designer

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Cuckoos
- 2. Skin issue
- 3. City in central Japan
- 4. Sorrels
- 5. Twinned diamond
- 6. Canadian province
- 7. Monetary units
- 8. Head honcho
- 9. Goddess of wisdom
- 10. Part of a play
- 11. Get rid of
- 13. Applicant
- 17. Bowling alleys have many
- 24. Explosive
- 25. "The Say Hey Kid"
- 26. Ultrahigh frequency
- 27. No (Scottish)
- 28. Make a mistake
- 29. Credit card term
- 35. Keyboard key
- 36. Woman (French)
- 37. In the middle of
- 38. Score perfectly
- 40. Coat a metal with an oxide coat
- 41. Deadly disease
- 42. A place to dock a boat (abbr.)
- 43. Belch
- 44. Member of U.S. Navy
- 45. "In ___": separate from others
- 47. Examine extensively
- 48. Adjust
- 49. Tattle
- 52. Actor Pitt
- 53. Gulls
- 54. Within
- 55. Exceptionally talented performer



Iowa State fall dean's list

More than 10,200 Iowa State University students have been recognized for outstanding academic achievement by being named to the fall semester 2022 Dean's List. Students named to the Dean's List must have earned a grade point

average of at least 3.50 on a 4.00 scale while carrying a minimum of 12 credit hours of graded course work.

Among those students were Emma Hennessy of Gardner and Ashlee Kelly of Wilmington.

COALER SPORTS

Coalers will have a Comets rematch to start the regional

The Reed-Custer boys basketball clinched at least a tie for the ICE conference title on Friday by defeating Coal City, 60-47.

The Comets were to play last night (Tuesday) at Streator for a chance at the out right title. (Results were unknown as of press time.)

The bad news for the Coalers is they will have to play Reed-Custer again this Saturday in the first round of the regionals.

The Comets were up 12-3 in the first quarter before Coal City warmed up and closed the gap to 29-25 at the break. Reed-Custer made their free throws count in the closing minutes, shooting 10-for-17 for the game, to win it.

Coal City was led by Carson Shepard who finished with 15 points. Carter Garrelts contributed 13 points and 13 rebounds while Cason Headley ended up with 12 points and four rebounds.

Coaler Jim Feeny tallied seven points while Owen Wren made a three-pointer.

Lucas Foote led the RCHS with 20 points (three three-pointers), four rebounds and three steals. Jake McPhearson followed with 15 points, six rebounds and five assists. Josh Bohac contributed 12 points,



Photo by Zadie Sims

KEEPING THE BALL away from Reed-Custer is Coal City senior Garrett Keeley who just made a rebound on Friday.

six rebounds and two assist.

Wes Shats led the team defensively with 12 rebounds, two assists and six points. Jace Christian was a great help with six assists, six rebounds and

four points. Colin Monroe had three points and one rebound.

The Coalers travel to Braidwood for a 1 p.m. contest on Saturday. If they upset the Comets they play at 7:30 p.m.

on Wednesday in Seneca against the winner of Wilmington vs. Bishop McNamara. The regional championship will be 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 24 in Seneca.



Photo by Zadie Sims

CARTER GARRELTS shoots the ball for Coal City on Friday while battling at Reed-Custer. The Coalers lost but will get a chance to avenge on Saturday when they travel back to Braidwood for the first game of regional play.



Photo by Amy Walker

SHOOTING FOR TWO points under the basket for the Coal City varsity is Audrey Cooper.



Photo by Amy Walker

KEEPING THE BALL in play for the Lady Coalers is Carly Morris.

Pontiac spoils hopes for Lady Coaler post play

The Coal City varsity girls basketball team lost to Pontiac in overtime, 60-56, on Saturday during the first round of regional play.

The loss concludes their season with a 21-8 record, 10-4 in the conference.

The Lady Coalers grabbed a 16-6 lead in the first frame

before Pontiac fought back to close within 25-21 at the half. It was neck-and-neck in the second half after Pontiac went on a 16-8 run in the third.

Pontiac made its free throws down the stretch, finishing 24-for-34 as the Lady Coalers had three key players foul out.

Mia Ferrias and Audrey Cooper led the team with 17 points each. Makayla Henline followed with eight points, four rebounds, two steals and six assists. Mackenzie Henline had a great defensive game with 14 rebounds and four steals. She also chipped in seven points. Abby Gagliardo contributed three points, one rebound and two steals.

The Lady Coalers defeated Dwight 47-33 to conclude the regular season on Wednesday

Audrey Cooper led the team with 12 points, five rebounds and four steals. Mia Ferrias and Abby Gagliardo followed with 10 points each. Ferrias also had seven rebounds while Gagliardo had five rebounds. Makenzie Henline had a great defensive game with eight rebounds and four steals. Henline also helped out with five assists and seven points.

Paige walker chipped in 3 points and one rebound. Makayla Henline and Kerigan Copes each had two points. Kylee Kennell helped out with one point and one assist.




Photo by Zadie Sims
CARSON HEADLEY, a Coal City senior, looks to pass the ball on Friday at Reed-Custer.

Another win for the Warriors




CCMS VARSITY WRESTLING team competed at the Mid-State duals and were crowned the champions for the third straight year. Team members include (kneeling, from left): Jason Piatak, Brody D'Orazio, Ryder Gill, Brantly Brooks, Owen Petersen, Jake Munsterman and Cooper Morris. Standing are Coach Petersen, Max Christensen, Gabe Hamilton, Landon Bomba, Alex Carlson, Fabian Hernandez, Chris Groves, Bobby Stout, Cater Teague, Cam Minuth, Theo Fritz, Gavin Roudis, Nora Minuth, Tyson Price and Coach Morris.



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WINNING THE CHAMPIONSHIP at 195 pounds on Saturday was Coal City's Joey Breneman who out-scored Seneca's Chris Peura 10-2.



RIDE HIM OUT — Coal City's Mataro Blessing locks up his opponent from Peotone on Saturday during the sectional championship match at 145 pounds. Blessing won the title and advances to state on Thursday.

Coalers an elite group of state qualifiers

All 14 advance setting record

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

The IHSA state wrestling tournament features 16 qualifiers in each of 14 weight classes. What's remarkable is Coal City will have a wrestler in each weight level when the Class 1A event begins on Thursday in Champaign, IL.

It was a great day to be a Coaler Saturday during the sectional when all 14 qualified, a school record. Their previous best was 11 in 2020 and 2017.

They simply dominated the field with six sectional champions, four second place finishes, two in third place and two fourths.

"This is by far the most we've had, qualifying the entire team. I don't know how many teams have done it but it's very rare," noted Coal City coach Mark Masters. "There were some really tough draws for us in the middle weight classes yet we still had everybody qualify. That's a testament to the talent and skill level this group has."

Taking firsts were Culan Lindemuth (106), Brody Widlowski (113), Brant Widlowski (138), Mataeo Blessing (145) and Braiden Young (182). Coming in second were Aidan Kenney (120), Jake Piatak (132), Jack Poyner (160) and Derek Carlson (170). Qualifying in third place were Drake Dearth (220) and Michael Gonzalez (285); and in fourth were Brock Finch (126) and Landin Benson (152).

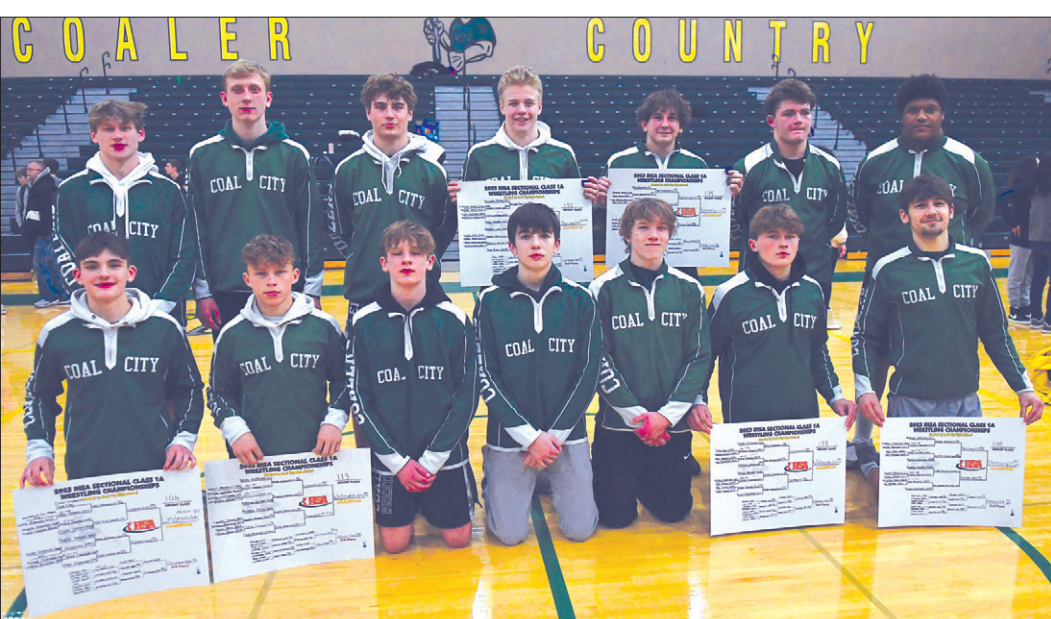
Lindemuth (38-9) punched his ticket to state for the second year in a row with a 14-4 major decision over Blake Arseneau from Bishop McNamara (27-9). The Coaler sophomore pinned his two earlier opponents to make it to the championship bout.

Lindemuth placed third at state as a freshman and will go up against freshmen Maddux Steele (39-8) in the prelim round at state. He'll need a couple of wins to make it to the semi-final against junior Hunter Robbins (31-1) from Illini Bluff. If he knocks off Robbins he'll likely face Drew Sadler (47-2) from Anna or Dean Wainwright (45-1) Riverdale for the championship.

As a freshman, Brody Widlowski (35-1) is one of four state qualifiers at 113 pounds with only one loss. He battled a familiar foe for the sectional title, beating Wilmington's Landon Dooley (37-9) by 6-3 decision. He too pinned his first two opponents with falls of :50 and 3:56.

At state Brody will face Murphyboro's Kaiden Richards (40-12) in the first round. A victory would lead him to Clinton VarHeecke (44-1) from D. Lutheran who suffered his first loss in the sectional championship. It won't be any easier in the semi-final where Widlowski will likely face Tyson Waughtel, Carlyle who has a 46-1 record.

For a third year Brant "Buddy" Widlowski is a state qualifier. Last year Buddy placed 5th in state at 120 pounds, Now at 138, the Coaler junior has only one loss in 22 matches winning the sectional crown with falls of :21 and 1:18 before



A RECORD GROUP—Coal City High School advanced 14 qualifiers for the state finals on Saturday during the section, a new school record. The Coalers ended up with six sectional champs, four seconds, two thirds and two fourths. Advancing to the state finals starting Thursday are (from left) Culan Lindemuth, Brody Widlowski, Aidan Kenney, Brock Finch, Jake Piatak, Buddy Widlowski and Mataeo Blessing. Standing are Landin Benson, Jack Poyner, Derek Carlson, Braiden Young, Joey Breneman, Drake Dearth and Michael Gonzalez.

getting a 13-7 decision in the title match over Bryson Spaulding (10-4) from IC Catholic.

Brant will square off against Tyler Roth (19-6) from El Paso-Gridley in the prelims. He is the only 138 wrestler in the bottom bracket with only loss so he will be the favored until the semi-final when he may face Mason Tieffel (48-2) from Benton. In the top bracket will be Reed-Custer's Jeremy Eggleston (38-9) who needs to get past senior Brock Smith (49-1) Riverdale if he wants revenge against Widlowski in the championship.

At 145, senior Mataeo Blessing (41-3) placed 1st thanks to an 11-2 major decision over Peotone's Ian Kreske (36-16). To get there he pinned his first two opponents in 2:55 and 1:19.

Blessing enters state in the lower bracket where his first round opponent will be Will Winter (27-5) from Clinton. If he wins two in a row he will likely face Illini Bluff's Paul Ishikawa, a senior who is undefeated in 47 matches. If Blessing gets the upset he would reach the championship against opponents with weaker records.

Coal City senior Braiden Young (38-1) placed second at 182 a year ago. He's determined to win a state championship this time around with the best record in the bottom bracket. On Saturday, he earned a 16-2 major decision over Hunter Hull (Clifton Central, 34-7) for the sectional title. He started with a 1:01 fall before winning the semi-final with an 8-5 decision.

At state his prelim match is against TJ Conner (41-8) of Tremont. He'll need to beat Bryar Lane (48-3) of Porta to likely face Griffin

Luke (47-1) of Lena in the championship.

At 195, Joey Breneman (39-5) became sectional champion with back-to-back falls of 2:28 and 1:29 before recording a 10-2 major decision over Chris Peura (Seneca, 44-7). Breneman will square off against Gibson City's Aiden Sancken (31-4) in the first round and will have to get past William Blue (40-7) of Taylorville in round two.

Coal City freshman Aidan Kenney (29-14) settled for second place at sectional after being pinned 2:42 by Saul Trejo (IC Catholic, 8-2). Kenney won his first match 7-3 over Nathaniel Sales (Rickover Naval Academy, 24-9) before pinning Donald Bunton (Chicago Perspectives/Leadership, 22-8) in 1:53.

Kenney will face Leyton Cobine (29-9) from Roxanna in the prelims. He then needs to beat Ty Edwards (42-6) from Yorkville Christian if he wants to reach the semi-finals against top seed Payton Murphy (36-2) from Tremont. Win those three and he could end up in a rematch with Trejo from IC Catholic for the championship.

Another runner-up is 132 Jake Piatak (6-1) who was edged 2-0 by Vin Moreno (Chicago (Phoenix Military Academy, 40-3). Piatak, a senior, got to the championship bout with major decisions 8-0 and 10-2. He enters state against Mason Mark (43-6) of Tremont.

Jack Poyner (35-12) placed 2nd at 160 in a sudden victory loss (SV-1 6-4) to Carter Watkins (Manteno, 30-6). The Coal City senior made it to the first place match with a 13-7 decision then a 5:15 fall over Reed-Custer's Landon Markle (13-3).

Poyner will have experience over his first round opponent at state in sophomore Angel

Zamora (40-10) from Hoopston.

At 170, Derek Carlson (34-6) settled for second after being shutout 5-0 by Reed-Custer's Rex Pfeifer (43-5). Carlson started out right, beating his first two opponents with pins of 1:02 and 3:22.

Carlson went to state a year ago and placed third at 160. He returns as a senior who faces senior Reese Shymansky (37-4) from Farmington. He'll be challenged from the get-go then likely face Dayton Huffman of Murphyrho who has a 37-1 record.

Credit senior Drake Dearth (37-8) for battling his way back to claim third place at 220. Dearth started with falls of 3:03 and 1:29 before being pinned by Gabriel Kaminski (Nazareth Academy, 27-0) in the semi-final. He stuck Vinny Gonzalez (IC Catholic) in 1:34 in the wrestleback to battle against Alex Cardenas (Peotone, 37-12) which he won 5-2 in a tie breaker.

Dearth enters state against Ethan Ladd (37-8) from Macomb. With a pair of wins Dearth could face Reed-Custer's Kody Marschner (36-2) in the quarterfinal.

At 285, senior Michael Gonzalez (27-7) won by fall over Antoine Arnold (Chicago (Horizon/Southwest Chicago, 20-4) with a 1:27 pin. Gonzalez pinned his first win before getting pinned himself. He then won by injury default and :57 fall and 3:46 fall.

He enters state against Hunter Wilson (47-3) of Bismark. He could eventually face Gunnar Berg of Reed-Custer in the quarterfinal if they both win earlier matches.

Qualifying in fourth place were Coalers Brock Finch (35-14) at 126 pounds and Landin Benson (22-5) at 152 pounds. Finch lost the third place match 8-4 to Micah Spinazzola (Peotone, 38-11) while Benson was surprised in :33 with a fall to Joseph Gliatta (IC Catholic, 9-3).

Finch, a freshman, goes up against senior Trevor Hedges (44-2) from Canton while Benson, a sophomore, will battle senior Max Kelly (40-6) of Kewanee.

The hope is all 14 bring home some hardware. Coach Masters said it's pretty much up to each Coaler to determine their outcome.

"Their focus has to be on taking one match at a time," Masters said. "One thing we always preach is effort, not performance. Can you wrestle for six minutes and say I did everything I possibly could to win?"

"If you can say you tried your hardest then the outcome is the outcome. It's something that you don't always have control over. But the one thing we do have control over is our effort. You can wrestle well and lose; and you can wrestle poorly and win. We're gonna love you no matter what."

"But the thing that you have to do, you got to look in the mirror and say, 'Hey, did I give everything I had?' And only they can answer that question," commented Masters.

Prelims start on Thursday. The championship matches end up on Saturday at 6 p.m. inside Assembly Hall on the campus of University of Illinois-Champaign.



OFF HIS FEET—Coal City's Buddy Widlowski lifts his opponent from ICCP in a takedown attempt at 138 pounds. Widlowski finished in 1st place on Saturday.



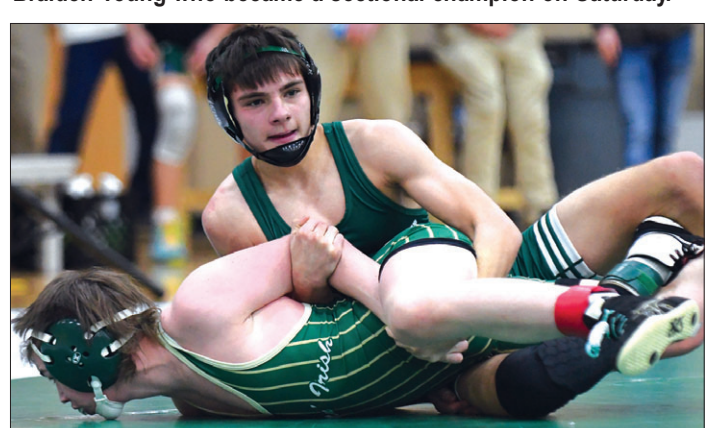
COALER SENIOR Jack Poyner checks the score during his 6-4 sudden victory loss to Carter Watkins from Manteno. Poyner advances to state with a second place sectional medal.



CONFERENCE RIVALS—Coal City's Brody Widlowski and Wilmington's Landon Dooley battled each other once again during the first place match at sectional on Saturday. Widlowski won 6-3 to claim the sectional championship at 113.



RETURNING TO STATE at 182 pounds will be Coaler senior Braiden Young who became a sectional champion on Saturday.



RETURNING TO STATE—Culan Lindemuth took first place in the sectional tournament to advance to state for the second year in a row.