

Ag education in the spotlight



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Study looks at future of Reed Road

BY ANN GILL EDITOR

The village of Coal City is putting \$150,000 into preliminary engineering for the reconstruction of Reed Road.

It has long been the village's intent to see the roadway improved from South Broadway west to Route 47. So in the words of Mayor Terry Halliday, the engineering study "is the right thing to be doing."

Phase one engineering is the first step toward gaining the funding needed to complete the second phase of engineering and ultimately the dollars necessary to do the work.

Chamlin & Associates, the village's engineering firm, will complete the phase one engineering focusing on a 3-mile section of Reed Road from Broadway to Gorman Road.

According to the engineer, the scope of the

"THAT ROAD NEEDS TO BE DONE. AT THE END OF THE DAY, REED ROAD IS GOING TO BE A MAJOR EAST-WEST THOROUGHFARE, IT MIGHT NOT BE IN OUR LIFETIMES, BUT IT WILL WEST TO THE HIGHWAY."

TERRY HALLIDAY MAYOR, VILLAGE OF COAL CITY

work is to reconstruct the roadway with new asphalt pavement, ditches and safety improvements, as well as improved intersections along that stretch of roadway.

The engineering report will be prepared in accordance with Illinois Department of Transportation [IDOT] requirements for federal funding. This will allow the village to then seek additional support when available to advance the project.

The scope of the work is comprised of

seven areas, the largest costs—\$100,000—coming in topographical and land surveys and roadway genetics.

The village entered into an agreement with Maine Township that it will contribute a minimal amount, between \$195 and \$250, to the study.

The township has jurisdiction over about two miles of the three miles to be reviewed.

Village Administrator Matt Fritz said the \$150,000 will come from a \$1 million grant the

village secured through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity [DCEO] for capital projects.

The majority of the dollars received will cover the cost of a storm and street improvements on Second Avenue. A bid opening on that project is set for March 16.

Fritz said Reed Road continues to be a priority for the Grundy County Master Transportation Plan. Funds are earmarked in the county's five year capital improvement plan for upgrading the Reed Road and Broadway intersection in fiscal year 2025.

"The good news is we have the \$150,000 to do phase one and I'm glad it's part of the master plan for Grundy County. That road needs to be done. At the end of the day, Reed Road is going to be a major east-west thoroughfare, it

SEE REED ROAD, PAGE 2

Time to paint the tower!

Financial audit to cost village heck of a lot more

BY ANN GILL EDITOR

For more than a decade a local firm has conducted the village of Coal City's annual financial audit, but that is changing.

Brian Zabel & Associates, of Morris is no longer providing municipal auditing services, the announcement coming to the village at the start of the calendar year.

With just two months until the end of the fiscal year, the village has hired a new auditor—Sikich, a large firm with offices across the country.

"We want to invest in what we hope will become a long-lasting relationship with the village of Coal City," Sikich stated in its proposal to the village.

The proposal came in response to the village's request for proposals that was posted shortly after the village learned it no longer had a firm to auditor, a requirement of all government agencies.

"There is a much greater demand than firms able and willing to provide this service currently. Getting responses to

SEE AUDIT, PAGE 2



Photo by Eric Fisher

BEST IN STATE! Members of the Coal City wrestling team celebrate with the 1st place state trophy on Saturday in Bloomington, IL after defeating Yorkville Christian 32-31 in the Class 1A championship. It is the first time in school history the Coalers finish in 1st place in wrestling after trying 11 times before. Team members (from left) Rey Gonzalez, Jack Poyner, Culan Linemuth, Joey Breneman, Michael Gonzalez, Mataeo Blessing and Buddy Widlowski turn hold the trophy high for Coaler fans to see. Additional state final coverage inside this week's edition.



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Jury finds Joliet man guilty in deputy shooting

Following a week-long trial, a jury of 12 declared a Joliet man guilty of attempted first degree murder in the shooting of a Grundy County Sheriff's deputy.

DeMarkus Denwiddie was found guilty on three counts each of attempted murder and aggravated battery to a peace officer and one count of aggravated discharge of a firearm, the ruling coming on Friday, Feb. 24.

Denwiddie was taken into custody following a manhunt in the village of Mazon on the evening of Oct.

7, 2021.

The incident began just after 5 p.m. that day when Deputy Tyler Post attempted to make a traffic stop on a vehicle for speeding and unsafe passing.

While Post was approaching the vehicle, the driver accelerated southbound on Route 47.

The deputy pursued the vehicle driven by Denwiddie into the village of Mazon where the driver pulled a U-turn in front of the squad car forcing it to crash into his vehicle just south of Grand Ridge Road.

Denwiddie fled on foot towards downtown Mazon, and the deputy gave chase.

When within arm's reach, the sheriff's office reports, Denwiddie pulled a pistol from a bag and fired four shots at point blank range. Post was struck three times.

The deputy was struck twice in the upper body, his ballistics vest stopping both bullets. The third bullet struck his left forearm, which went through and through. He was transported to Morris Hospital for treatment.

Law enforcement obtained information that Denwiddie was sheltering in a second floor apartment in the 500 block of Depot Street and with the assistance of tactical teams, Denwiddie was taken into custody roughly three hours after the incident began.

Denwiddie will be sentenced in the coming months, according to the sheriff's office.

Post, who joined the sheriff's office in 2018, made a full recovery and returned to duty not long after the incident.

"We would like to thank the Grundy County State's Attorney's Office for their hard work in presenting this case with the interest of our citizens at heart. We would also like to extend a large thank you to our area law enforcement families, even Morris Police Department, our fire families and our residents for their support in our office and Deputy Post's family," Sheriff Ken Briley said in a statement following last week's trial.



Photo by David Sinkular

MEMBERS OF St. Juvin Post 1336 Veterans of Foreign Wars who served the US military during the Vietnam War recently shared their experiences with students at Coal City High School. Commander James (Hoppy) Phillips joined Keith Roseland, quartermaster/adjutant, and Earl (Shorty) Fatlan in answering students' questions.

St. Juvin Vietnam Vets tell their story

St. Juvin Post 1336 adjutant/quartermaster Keith Roseland gave his 20th presentation of the "Vietnam Experience, the Soldier's Story," to students at Coal City High School.

On Feb. 14, 86 students in David Sinkular's Current U.S. History class that features U.S. history in three parts—1820-1900, 1900-1945, and 1945-present day—heard the presentation. The Vietnam War is in the 1945-present class and it is the second unit which focuses on the 60s/70s and spends about one week on the Vietnam War.

Originally the presentation was part of Dean Vigna's RUSH (Recent U.S. History)

elective class at CCHS.

Following a pandemic pause, the program was brought back into the school.

The presentation includes a slide show from Roseland, who served in the Army as a sergeant in the Signal, Plans, and Operations Section of the II Corps Support Command, personal collection.

Over the past years Roseland has been accompanied by other members of St. Juvin Post 1336 Veterans of Foreign Wars who also share their Vietnam experiences.

This year Post commander James (Hoppy) Phillips, who served as a Sergeant in the Marine Corps as an Air Crewman, and SPC4 Earl

(Shorty) Fatlan, who served as an infantryman with the 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) joined Roseland in his presentation.

All of this year's presenters have the National Defense Service, Vietnam Service and Vietnam Campaign medals. Fatlan also has the Purple Heart and Combat Infantry Badge.

The program highlights the service of Marine Lance Corporal Cecil Russell, the community's only Vietnam War death, who was killed in action in February 1968 while serving as an infantryman in Thua-Thien Province, Republic of Vietnam.

Lance Corporal Russell's

U.S. awards include the Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal and Vietnam Service Medal. He also received the Vietnam Campaign Medal and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm from the Republic of Vietnam. The display also includes his personal Bible, letters he wrote to relatives, pictures, boot camp book and casket flag.

These personal items of Russell, who is buried at the Braceville-Gardner Cemetery, are on display at the Coal City Public Library in the Local History section on the second floor.

Letter to the editor

To protect Maine Township roads

MAINE TOWNSHIP—Maine Township roads typically are posted with 8 ton weight limits from Feb. 1 to May 1 annually. This means garbage removal is limited to small trucks or the township allows Republic to place a dumpster on township property. Those utilizing the dumpster please access it from the parking lot. Do not back through the yard to the dumpster. Also please put your loose garbage in a heavy duty garbage bag. We have loose garbage blowing onto township and neighboring properties. My responsibility to the township is to protect and maintain the roads of Maine Township. It is not to pick up other's garbage and fix ruts in the township property's yard grass. Thank you for your cooperation.

Bill Stahler,
Road Commissioner

Reed Road

might not be in our lifetimes, but it will west to the highway," Halliday said.

Fritz said the village will likely apply for phase two design engineering in 2024 and 2026 call for projects through the Will County Governmental League Transportation Committee.

In moving forward with engineering, "we're trying to learn some lessons and get it done sooner than later," Fritz said.

Audit

the request for proposals has proven to be the toughest step in preparing a proposal to be adopted by the Village Board," Village Administrator Matt Fritz said. He added that in many cases, even getting a firm to call back proved difficult.

The work performed by Sikich will cost the village around \$35,700, roughly \$14,600 more before.

Fritz said some estimates were in upwards of \$50,000 for a basic audit.

Sikich will provide the village with an audit of its basic financial statements including management report and a tax increment financing (TIF) compliance report and audit if necessary.

The firm's local government team provides services to more than 450 counties, cities, villages, towns and other local governments.

Coal City joins the list of municipalities receiving auditing services along with the villages of Wheeling, Oswego, Arlington Heights, Winfield and city of Aurora.

Sikich has worked with the village in the past on a TIF development agreement that did not come to fruition and has assisted with the police pension fund as far as compiling some of the expenses.

"I can tell you I worked with Sikich when I was president of the police pension fund and they are wonderful people," Police Chief Chris Harseim said, just prior to the Village Board's approval to hire the firm.



COAL CITY ELEMENTARY School Students of the Week for Feb. 22 are (from left): Ryder Riley, Everett Proffit, Sophie Arteaga and Leo Christensen.



COAL CITY ELEMENTARY School Students of the Week for Feb. 22 are (from left): Kaden Melvin, Kamden Kerr and Emmett Scheer.



CAIDEN GIORDANO
Middle School



HELIX PATRL
Middle School



AUTUMN GARZA
Middle School



DOUGIE BEDINGER
Middle School



MAISY FRANKLIN
Middle School



COAL CITY INTERMEDIATE School Students of the Week for March 1 are (from left): Olivia Mierzwa, Jackson Pruim, Devon Fatlan and Aubrey Blake.



COAL CITY EARLY Childhood Center Students of the Week for March 1 in row one (from left) are: Sean Lewis, Riley Walker, Makenna Sinkular, Jacklyn Alexander and Landon Wazniak. Nolan Wren is in row two with James Susan, Hadley Stygar, Connor Yu and Evie Wren.

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COAL CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY NEWS

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.

Youth Art Month - Mar. 1 thru Mar. 28 - CCPLD in conjunction with the Coal City Unit #1 Art Dept. will be displaying artwork created by students in our district. Stop in the Library between March 1st-28th to see of the artwork displayed. If you would like to showcase a piece of art you created, please see someone in Youth Services. Join us on Tuesday, March 7th between 5:30 and 7 p.m. for Youth Art Night.

Oscar Predictions Contest - Select the correct Oscar winners between now and Saturday,

March 11 at 4pm. Only one voting ballot per person. Top 3 closest predictions will win a \$25 gift card to the local business of your choice. Must be an adult CCPLD cardholder to participate. Use QR code to access form.

Thursday, Mar. 2- Terrific Tots - 10 a.m.

Terrific Tots - 6 p.m.

Rabbit & Chick Glass Craft - 6 p.m. Adult CCPLD cardholders can make a cute spring bunny and chick out of wine glasses. Cost is \$5 for all supplies. Space is limited and colors vary.

Friday, Mar. 3- Mahjong, 1 p.m.

Fun Fridays, 3 p.m.

Dungeons & Dragons Game Night, 7 p.m.

Monday, Mar. 6- Makerspace Cart Mondays - All Day
Terrific Tots, 10 a.m.

Preschool Storytime, 11 a.m.

Kids off the Grid, 1 p.m.

Teen Artists, 3 p.m.

Family Lapsit, 6 p.m.

Preschool Storytime, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Mar. 7-Adult Book Club, 1 p.m.

Youth Art Night, 5:30-7 p.m. Celebrate Youth Art Night with us. CCPLD in conjunction with the Coal City Unit #1 Art Dept. will be displaying artwork created by students in our district. The evening activities will focus on the painting of Faith Ringgold's "Tar Beach." No registration required.

Wednesday, March 8. Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP), 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Family Lapsit, 10 a.m.

Preschool Storytime, 10 a.m.

Movie Day, The Fabelmans, 1 p.m.



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Eric D. Fisher, publisher
Ann Gill, editor



THE GRUNDY AREA FFA chapter observed National FFA Week with events and community service projects. The program is part of the Grundy Area Vocational Center's agriculture program house at Coal City High School. Brandy Biros serves as the program instructor and chapter advisor.

Ag education in the spotlight during FFA Week

BY ANN GILL EDITOR

Five years ago Grundy Area Vocational Center brought agriculture back into the classroom, giving students the opportunity to learn and engage in the community. "I never thought I would learn so much and it's more than agriculture," Audrey Cooper said about her experience in the program and subsequent membership in FFA. FFA is the leading youth organization that prepares members for leadership and careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture. Students enrolled in the GAVC program are also members of FFA, a program that boasts a membership of over 850,820 students nationwide from 8,995 local chapters. "To me, FFA means meeting new people and learning new things," said Cooper, who attends Coal City High School. The GAVC program and FFA membership is open to juniors and seniors at each of its feeder schools—Coal City, Morris, Gardner-South, Wilmington and Minooka—as well as Wilmington and Reed-Custer high schools. Brandy Biros serves as the course instructor and FFA chapter advisor. The two main focuses in her classroom are agronomy and animal science. "But, we do a lot more besides that. I want to expose them to the different careers and pathways from wildlife biologist to animal science, being a farmer/rancher to ag business, ag sales, even ag law," Biros said. "The communities are excited to have agriculture back in the classroom," she added. In addition to classroom instruction, the students have



Photo by Ann Gill

COAL CITY HIGH School teacher and coach Brad Schmitt was selected to kiss an animal—a donkey—as part of the National FFA Week celebration at the school. Students donated their change to get a teacher or staff member selected and on Friday, Feb. 24, Schmitt was called up in front of the student body to go face-to-face with his new four-legged friend.

a working farm with animals they tend. "Going to do chores at the farm is pretty cool," said Cassie Furhman, a student from Minooka. Furhman said she has learned a lot about crop science and animals, dairy cattle and just a wide variety of areas. Furhman comes from a family of farmers, but as Biros points out, "most of the students in our program do not come directly from a farm background, so they get excited to learn new things." Along with everything they learn in class, the students are gaining additional skills through their participation in FFA events. A highlight for many was attending the National Leadership Convention in Indianapolis, IN. "There was an opening ceremony with the national officers and there was like

60,000 people there. It was a really cool experience and we got to see what FFA is about on a bigger scale" said Madison Kapinus, a student from Coal City. She noted that the convention included a large career expo for students to learn about the various colleges and universities that offer ag education. Kapinus plans to pursue a career in agriculture. She is one of several students in the program focused on continuing their studies in the field. Bradley Burla, of Coal City, plans to continue in the family business of farming after high school. Classmate Courtney Kloeckner, from Reed-Custer High School, is looking into the fields of ophthalmology in veterinary science or artificial insemination in cattle and horses. And, Cooper is looking

into the field of conservation science. These career paths are all areas the students can focus on through their career development events [CDEs] as members of FFA, and for Burla those events are some of his favorite activities. Last week, the students celebrated National FFA Week with a series of dress up days and events that included daily ag trivia and an assembly that offered students at CCHS to participate in milk chugging, corn shucking and pie eating. Community service is a big part of the chapter experience and for FFA Week they got together to make blankets for a local animal shelter and through a kiss the animal fundraiser they collected more than \$215 and portion of that will go to assist a shelter. The remaining dollars will be used for chapter programming. The fundraiser had students at CCHS putting in change to have one of the staff members kiss an animal—a donkey—and that found teacher and coach Brad Schmitt going face-to-face with hooved animal in front of the student body. As part of the week-long activities, the students hosted a breakfast for the CCHS staff and even sent some on to the other high schools for their staffs to enjoy. The students said they enjoyed the week of activities and getting the word out about the agriculture program and FFA. "Ag education is important because you get more than just learning about agriculture, you learn life skills and manual skills that you can use outside of your work life. This is definitely one of my favorite classes," Kapinus said.

Corey's Crusaders to gather to celebrate his life, support family in grief

STAFF REPORT

Corey Smith, a sweet and loving 4-year old, the light in his family's eyes, will forever be remembered for the joy he brought in his short time on earth. His family made the heartbreaking announcement that he passed away Saturday evening, Feb. 25. "His memory will continue to beat in our hearts as we mourn his passing," his family posted on the Corey's Crusaders Facebook page. Corey had been diagnosed with having an atypical teratoid rhabdoid tumor [AT/RT]—a rare and fast growing cancerous tumor of the brain and spinal cord last month. The tumor was discovered attached to his brain stem at the base of his skull on Jan. 30 and the following day he underwent emergency surgery to place a shunt to drain the fluid away from his brain. A second surgery was conducted Feb. 1 to remove as much of the tumor as possible and a third procedure was conducted a few days later to place a permanent shunt. The family wrote that the growing tumor caused a blood vessel in his brain to hemorrhage, "This caused him to slip into a coma as he could no long breathe on his own. We made the decision to end his suffering and let him rest forever." A benefit scheduled to assist the Smith family set for Sunday, March 5 will continue as planned. Corey's family welcomes the community to join them in celebrating his life at that time. The celebration of life and benefit will take place at the Goose Lake Hall, 3935 Goose Lake Rd., Morris from 4-7 p.m. Proceeds from the spaghetti dinner and basket raffle benefit will go directly to the family. Dinner tickets at \$10 each for spaghetti with meat sauce, garlic bread, and water, available for eat in or take out. Direct donations to assist the family can also be made to Corey's Crusaders at Coal City Bank, Branch of Bank of Pontiac, 85 S. Broadway St.



COREY SMITH

State champions to be honored tonight

The Coaler wrestling team arrived home on Saturday with a police escort into town, and the state champions will receive another escorted trip through the village ahead of a community celebration scheduled for this evening—Wednesday, March 1.

The wrestling team and coaches will be honored by the Unit 1 Board of Education during its monthly meeting at 6 p.m. Due to the number of team members and their guests, the meeting will take place in the high school cafeteria. Following the Board recognition, the team will parade around town and return to the high school in time for a 7 p.m. celebration in the competition gym. This is the first state team championship in wrestling and the high school's third overall with a football championship in 1993 and a softball championship in 2010.

Coal City Public Library to celebrate youth art night

Celebrate Youth Art Night with the Coal City Public Library District (CCPLD) on Tuesday, March 7 between 5:30 and 7 p.m. CCPLD in conjunction with the Coal City Unit #1 Art Department will be displaying artwork created by students in our district. The evening activities will focus on the painting of Faith Ringgold's "Tar Beach." You can also stop in anytime the library is open March 1-28 to see all of the artwork displayed. If you would like to showcase a piece of art you created, please see someone in Youth Services. No registration is required for this event.

School district to accept bids for middle school floor repairs

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE
1. Coal City Community Unit School District #1 (hereinafter referred to as the Owner) will receive bids for the following project until 11:00 AM, local time, on March 8, 2023 at the District Office, 550 S. Carbon Hill Road, Coal City, IL 60416. Project #19-377 - COAL CITY CUSD #1 COAL CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL FLOOR REPAIRS 2023

2. Bids will be publicly opened and read at 11:15 AM and location noted above.
3. Contract Documents may be obtained by Bidding Contractors from Cordogan Clark & Associates, Inc., on their online plan room www.cordoganclarkplanroom.com on or after, February 17, 2023. Bidders may also contact Vesco Reprographics, Inc., www.vescorepro.com 1351 Aucutt Road, Montgomery, IL 60538, 630-896-2115, to obtain the bid documents.

4. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form of Bid Bond in the amount of 10% of the Base Bid (plus additive alternates) made payable to the Owner.
5. A mandatory pre-bid conference will be held at the following specified location on February 23, 2023 at 10:00 AM at Coal City Middle School front entrance, 500 S. Carbon Hill Road, Coal City, IL 60416. See Specification Section 002513 for further information.
6. All bidders are required to visit the site. A site visit will follow the pre-bid meeting. The project site will be available during regular school hours by appointment only. The project site is available for inspection on a limited basis.
7. The Contractor shall pay, if applicable, not less than the prevailing rate of wages as established, to all laborers, workmen and mechanics in the performance of Work under this Contract in accordance with "An Act regulating wages of laborers, mechanics and other employed under contracts of Public Works." 820 ILCS 130/1 et seq.
8. The Owner reserves the right to reject any and all bids, to waive any informality in bidding, or accept the bid that, in his opinion, will serve his best interests.
9. This Notice is written in the name of the Owner by Cordogan, Clark & Associates.
Published in the Coal City Courant on March 1, 2022.

Well repair to cost \$46,700

BY ANN GILL EDITOR

After recent testing determined the column pipe contained within one of the village of Coal City's wells was in need of repairs, bids were sought to get the work underway. As previously reported, the pipe that draws ground water to the surface needs to be pulled out, descaled and sprayed before the well is put back into service. The cost for well maintenance was originally approved at \$25,000, however the proposed cost tripled with the recommendation for descaling and spraying. In order to get the best price, the village put the work out to bid and two companies submitted prices ranging from \$70,926 to \$46,760.

The village went with the lower price submitted by Municipal Well & Pump to complete the repairs to the well that is currently off-line. Once cleaned and tested, the well—one of four utilized by the village—will be brought

back on-line. In other matters from the Feb. 22 meeting of the Village Board.

- Trustees entered into an intergovernmental agreement with Will County allowing emergency communication system access between Coal City Emergency Management Agency [CCEMA] and WESCOM 911 Communication Center.

There is no cost to the village for access to WESCOM, nor need for additional communications equipment.

Administrator Matt Fritz said the agreement in place to allow the CCEMA to communicate with Will County agencies while providing assistance for various emergency and community events.

- As the modernization of the village's wastewater treatment plant continues, the Village Board authorized a payment of \$393,685.40 to D Construction for work completed to date.

The village engineer reports work is scheduled to be completed next month on the

\$1.8 million improvement. Of the total project cost, \$1.67 million has been paid to the contractor.

- At the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Board, trustees granted a variance for the placement of solar panels on a residence at 1080 E. North St.

The variance was necessary as the planned installation did not meet the village code for shape, distance from roof edge and total square footage of the panels on the street side of the home.

It was noted that changes to the code regarding solar panels is under review by planning commissioners and public hearing on those changes is set to be held at 7 p.m. on March 6.

- Trustees approved purchase orders totaling \$46,839.04. Included in the bills were a \$7,683.45 payment to Graninco FS for fuel—unleaded \$3,560.28 and \$4,123.17 for diesel, \$6,250 for monthly legal fees, \$350 for Galentine's Day event prizes, \$4,898.41 for the re-submis-

Legislation would tell high school graduates about jobs in demand

SPRINGFIELD- State Senator Tom Bennett (R-Gibson City) is working to make sure students have better information on careers as they choose what programs to pursue in college.

"If students know more what educational requirements exist for certain jobs, as well as how lucrative those career paths are, then they will be able to make better choices in college," said Bennett. "This is about empowering students to help create the best possible futures for themselves."

Senate Bill 1356, filed by Bennett, would require the Illinois Board of Higher Education to annually compile a list of the most in-demand jobs in Illinois, along with the starting and median salaries for those occupations, and the education levels required to enter those fields.

On February 21, the Illinois Senate Higher Education Committee approved the measure. It now awaits action by the full Senate.

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 Mortgagor(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
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Litter alert

DIAMOND—I can't help but notice the garbage that seems to be everywhere including bags of dog poop, construction materials, plastic bags up in the trees. I'm sure it's not just my subdivision but everybody's subdivision. No wonder our lakes, streams, rivers and oceans are in trouble. When was the last time you ever heard of someone getting a ticket for littering because these people litter when nobody's looking. Is it mental health? Is it education? Or is it just pure ignorance? Take a drive down Route 113, Coal City Road or Interstate 55 you see litter everywhere. It's the same thing year after year. You'll even see mattresses dumped by the side of the road. I think these people need to smack themselves on the side of the head and realize what they're doing to the environment I see it on the golf courses people throw their garbage and beer cans into the woods when there's trash cans available at every tee off. It just drives me crazy. It's a no-brainer people, be responsible and show a good example for your friends and your kids.

Rossi Field

BRAIDWOOD—There is little known about the history about the vacant lot or why it came known as Rossi Field. Extremely hard to believe. This is a civic society, "written word" and it's governmental agencies. I am in my 70's. As a child we played grass-lot football in that field. Even one of the kids' older brother was a Braidwood policeman. The Reed-Custer High School had a huge field behind the high school. I don't know why the high school would have practiced at Rossi's field or even when. Perhaps when I was in Vietnam. So much little or less can I accept the word folklore except if it was led into a reference for fishing guide in a strip mine pit.

Bird flu outbreak

MORRIS—A nasty strain of H5N, virus currently causing the worst outbreak of disease among birds, was first identified in China in 1996 across America. 58 million chickens and turkeys have been killed to prevent its spread. Similar die-offs in poultry farms in Europe and Japan, one of the main reasons that eggs are so expensive lately. Good news: No record of any human getting infected with bird flu from eating eggs or poultry products.

Get out and vote

COAL CITY—Yeah, I just have a really big problem with the Coal City Area Club. There is a person on the committee that is not even a member of this club? That does not make any sense. Not at all. So you're letting a non member help run this club? They need to do something. People out there that are members of this club need to get out and vote and get on the board. This board we have is going to be the ruining of the club. Let's get our heads out of our butts. We're all nuts for letting these people run this club.

Gifting \$millions

MORRIS—President Biden made a surprise visit recently to Ukraine gifting another \$500 million. Plus recently gifted \$400 million worth of American made tanks. How much have the European countries donated to the Russia-Ukraine War? Keep paying your taxes!

Nasty politics

Pennsylvania's Democrat Senator Fetterman ran in the last election against Republican Dr. Oz for Senate. Senator Fetterman won. Democrats continue to be in charge of the Senate as a result. Senator Fetterman had been a recent stroke victim running in that highly emotional election. Shame on his doctor who claimed he was OK. Shame on President Biden and President Obama for all the fanfare. Senator Fetterman has been hospitalized twice since taking office presently for severe depression.

Young cop

WILMINGTON—On Thursday the 23rd I had an issue at my house. I had to call the police department non emergency number. Within a few minutes a very kind young man came over. I wish I could remember his last name so I could thank him more properly. He was very kind, courteous and professional. He introduced himself to me, shook my hand and asked if he could enter my house which I thought was very professional. The way he was dressed he could've made an extra on Chicago PD for sure. He looked very professional in his uniform. He addressed the issues that I called about and helped me out and then before he left he asked if he had addressed my concerns which he obviously did and then he asked if I had any other problems, issues or concerns that he could assist me with while he was there and obviously I didn't. I know that a lot of police officers in Wilmington are at the age where they are starting to retire and that breaks my heart to see them leaving. But it also brings me hope and comfort knowing that the city is hiring outstanding young men like the officer who came to my house. I have hope and comfort that we will have outstanding young men to serve and protect our community for many years. Thank you again for your service to Wilmington and to the citizens. Sheri Michaels

With our tax dollars

BRAIDWOOD—In the last Free Press an obvious supporter of the present administration said, "The current administration purchased 66 acres for \$1.8 million with two guaranteed businesses that is costing the taxpayers nothing." Giving the acreage away while we taxpayers are stuck paying off millions in bond payments is not exactly what I would call "costing the taxpayers nothing." We will be paying for that for many years to come. And don't forget that property taxes will be rebated to the business for 10 years, 55 percent of the sales taxes will be rebated, there will be no permit fees or construction fees and there are also a myriad of other taxpayer losses. And don't forget that almost \$5 million of improvements to the property will be paid for by us through TIF. And in case you didn't know, the "T" in TIF stands for "tax", as in my tax money and your tax money. And what many don't seem to real-

ize is that since the dealerships will only comprise less than 20 acres, the remainder of the taxpayer improved property can be sold by the dealers and they get to keep the proceeds. You read that right. They get to make a huge capital gain profit on real estate that taxpayers paid for and taxpayers improved. These are not, as another Sound off article stated "false insinuations". These are facts put out by the council itself, only without their spin.

...pants on fire

SHADOW LAKES—When I was in grade school there was a phrase that we used to describe people and I think this phrase definitely fits the public servants in Washington, D.C. since they only know how to live off the taxpayers' funds and do nothing but tell the American citizens not to complain because things are just fine and not to worry the government will help you anytime if the American citizens have problems. So this phrase fits every aspect of the Democratic party and it is doubtful they will be able to understand this phrase in their brains. "Liar, Liar pants on fire."

Right to know

DIAMOND—The time has arrived for all the public servants in Washington, D.C. must produce a complete list of their assets. But the public servants will try to prevent the American citizens from seeing their assets by saying that their finances are none of the public's business. While public servants destroy the finances of the American citizen, fill their bank accounts with high salaries and pensions, they push the agenda that Americans should just shut up and obey. So any public servant that does not honor the laws of U.S.A. and legal rights of every American citizen should be put behind bars for treason without delays. Since some public servants only know that the American citizen should not have anything to say about what they do. Dictatorship is not freedom.

What a change

BRAIDWOOD—Yes, it is election time again and I have been here for many administrations. I have to say the last four years have been the easiest and most relaxing one by far. I have seen pleasant mood change of those in city offices. I am extremely happy we are once again running a positive budget instead of in the red. So a big pat on the back to the council members for that, and most important to me is our first responders. I regularly run into members of the fire department, extremely friendly and helpful people and our police department. Wow, what a change. I actually know most of them and will strike a little conversation instead of avoiding them, and everything done without helicopters and turning Braidwood into Chi-raq.

Doing a proper job

BRAIDWOOD—To last week's "only one concern," I'm just curious what is it that city administrator Tony Altieri didn't do for you? Is it he didn't smile enough for you? Is that he took this city by the horns and wrestled in new business with a vengeance and helped demo the previous administration's many million dollar debt back to a positive amount? He's done an amazing job. I could care less if he ever cracks a smile.

Fashion police

WILMINGTON—Marjorie Taylor Greene recently criticized Ukraine President Zelenskyy for not wearing a tie when meeting with President Biden. Having seen how Greene dresses, she is in no position to be the fashion police.

Let me know

BRAIDWOOD—In response to "Too early for me," if you let me know where you live I will leave my route to pick up your garbage for your convenience at 7 a.m. Maybe you can have coffee for me.

Talk is cheap

COAL CITY—Over 60 years ago, in the Navy, it was easy for us to solve the problems of the world. Then, a kid would always add his two cents to the conversation by saying 'Talk is cheap.' We have changed a lot for the better in 60 years but I think of him often when I read Sound-off or hear the news today. Now many people only have gripes with no solutions to their complaints as if it is up to others to do the hard work they are unwilling to do. Cars should drive themselves, artificial intelligence must solve all our problems and moving to Mars is preferable to fixing this planet. What stupidity. Are people really buying into all this baloney? It is time to be self sufficient whenever you can. The USA has become a lot better in the last 60 years that I know of and if you don't think so tell me where else you would have the freedoms that we enjoy. They are worth keeping. The kids are the future and they deserve better than they are getting. Talk is cheap so quit complaining and start being a part of fixing today's faults. Homeless people camped on public property should have a way out of why they are there, except jail. Single mothers need improved treatment. Politics and education are on the rocks and need citizen input bad. Live responsibly. One's liberty should never be an excuse for the irresponsibility of not following the rule of law. Don't sell yourself short as it is often the little guy who solves problems for the big shots who cannot see what is right in front of their nose. Your idea may be the right answer that no one else has thought of yet.

Herman

Compared to the Bears

BRAIDWOOD—Those of you who are football fans like myself may be following the Chicago Bears' possible move to Arlington Heights in a new stadium located where the Arlington racetrack is. Their request, or is it a demand, that the new stadium be funded in part with taxpayer dollars has raised quite an uproar. While the dollar amounts are certainly different, the policy is exactly the same as Braidwood subsidizing car dealers with our tax dollars. I recently came across a statement by Brian Costin, the deputy director of Illinois' watchdog group Americans for Prosperity. He



previously served as a policy advisor to the Illinois Governor and worked at the Illinois Policy Institute as a local government transparency and anti-corruptions expert. Regarding the Bears he stated "If they have a viable project, they shouldn't need tax subsidies. They are saying one of two things: 1. They need tax subsidies because their project is fundamentally bankrupt or 2. They're just trying to pad their profit." He might as well have been talking about the Braidwood Council giving away the store to the car dealerships. Maybe Mr. Altieri and his group should have talked to Mr. Costin before they gave away my hard earned tax money.

Creative bookkeeping

BRAIDWOOD—I was in a nearby restaurant recently and was sitting near a Braidwood official. I couldn't help but overhear him tell those at his table that Braidwood "passed" their audit. I knew that could not be true because in the accounting profession there is no such thing as "passing" or "failing" an audit. Those are not generally accepted accounting terms. Rather, an audit is either "unqualified" or "qualified." An unqualified audit report is one that concludes that the financial statements of the city fairly present its affairs in all material aspects. A qualified report is one in which there is an issue regarding the application, acceptability, or adequacy of the accounting policies. Braidwood's audit report was qualified. For auditors, accounting irregularities must be material or financially worth consideration to qualify a report. The audio of the meeting is very poor so I'm not sure of the severity of the problem. But one thing did clearly come across. The problem has been ongoing for several years and it has yet to be fixed. And this is the city council that borrowed almost \$2 million on the backs of us taxpayers so they could literally give it away to two businesses. And that doesn't include almost \$5 million more of taxpayer dollars to improve what they already gave away. The next time you hear one of them talk about how much money Braidwood will be making on the deal, keep their creative bookkeeping in mind.

No negatives

BRAIDWOOD—Most of the sound-off negative articles are about Braidwood Mayor and council. It seems to be a nice town with the most beautiful near brand new school buildings for all levels thanking ComEd contributions and a state of the art Fire Department, also with ComEd's donations. Nice town to raise a young family in we would think. Every small town across our country is still suffering since the lockdown Covid virus and businesses shut down or left. You're safe in a small town. If you're so miserably unhappy, just move.

Loss of Medicaid

MORRIS—As many as 700,000 Illinoisans may stand to lose their Medicaid coverage after March 31. The Department of Healthcare and Family Services is working to reduce that number and help those affected find health insurance elsewhere. Medicaid is a health insurance program for poor and disabled people that is jointly funded by the federal government and the states. The Democrat Congress in December passed a spending bill that put an end to a pandemic era rule that sent billions of additional dollars to states if they agreed to keep Medicaid patients enrolled during the public health emergency without having to go through the normal reapplication process. The change means many who have been receiving Medicaid coverage throughout the pandemic will have to reapply for benefits leading to loss of coverage if the individual would no longer qualify for benefits or if they fail to complete reapplication. Nationwide, the federal government estimates that 15 million will lose their coverage. Illinois estimates 384,000 will lose coverage and advise Medicaid enrollees should fill out renewal forms as soon as possible in April. During the pandemic Medicaid enrollment in Illinois grew by one million enrollees during that period to 3.9 million. Our state also received \$3 billion in addition in federal funding to pay for it. Now the fun starts knowing over one million illegals are being cared for free and being handed monies. Thanks Joe and Kamala.

Marijuana edibles

The number of young kids, especially toddlers, who accidentally ate marijuana-laced treats has risen sharply over five years as pot became legal in more places in the US, according to a pediatric journal. More than 7,000 confirmed cases of kids younger than 6 eating marijuana edibles were reported to the nation's poison control centers between 2017 and 2021, climbing from about 200 to more than 3,000 per year. Nearly a quarter of the children wound up hospitalized, some seriously ill.

A proud Democrat

Sharon, I congratulate you for your efforts in helping your students become good writers. I taught at the high school and college levels for more than three decades and won awards for both my teaching and writing so I do not need lectures from you. You asked me to explain why I am a proud Democrat and I am happy to comply. The Democrats have promoted many laws and programs that have improved our country. When Democrat Franklin Roosevelt was president laws were passed ending child labor and encouraging union growth. Laws were also passed implementing minimum wage, the 40-hour work week and overtime pay. Social Security, the most important program created in the 20th century, came into existence under the Democrats. These changes allowed the working people to join the middle class and all the people to retire with dignity. Of course the right wingers opposed Social Security and called it communism. That should sound familiar if you read sound-off regularly. The GI bill was also passed under the Democrats helping veterans returning from World War II and all the wars since. You may remember how Democratic President Kennedy used diplomacy and avoided a World War but made the Russians remove their missiles from Cuba in 1962. Contrast this with the Republican president named Bush who lied to the world and sent our troops into war to find weapons that never existed. Medicare became law under President Johnson, another Democrat, though his opponents denounced it as socialism. The Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts were also enacted under Johnson though both are under attack from Republicans today. You may have heard of Pell Grants which are named for a Democratic Senator and help working class students pay for college. President Obama extended Healthcare to millions with the Affordable Care Act which Trump promised to replace but failed. I am in my 80th year on earth and under President Biden we have the lowest unemployment since I was a senior in high school. Everyone who wants a job is working and wages are going up. As a person who grew up during the Cold War I am proud that we have a president who will stand up to Putin and Russian aggression unlike his predecessor who groveled at the feet of the ruthless murderer of Ukrainian children. I am proud of our Democratic Governor who has straightened out the states finances so that the state is paying its bills on time. But now Sharon, as you enjoy your Social Security and Medicare I have an assignment for you. Please explain what woke means. All the Right Wingers blab about it but nobody knows what it is. Also define deep state and what is the great reset? Also tell me why Republicans do not want students to learn American History and why are they always attacking schools and educators like us? And if you want a good grade make sure your response is well written since my red pen is nearly out of ink.

No forgetting

WILMINGTON—Here are some fun facts I read in the Chicago Sun Times: Florida has a higher crime rate than Illinois. Gun confiscation in American airports has hit a record high. Third, the number one excuse of the gun owners is they forgot they had the guns. New rule: If you don't know where your gun is you don't get to own one.

Penny Lane

Truth be told

DIAMOND—I speak boldly to you because we have a twofold crisis on our hands. A very small group of radicals are trying to force the rest of us to go along with their insane and immoral agenda. While the vast majority of us who disagree with their godless agenda are silent. The result is an upside down world where you can feel the evil all around us. Liberals screaming for the right to abort their own children. Every day school teachers pushing sex lesson on children as young as K through second grade and our boys are encouraged to be girls. Things can seem pretty bleak during difficult times. Just like you, I turn to the Lord and seek His plan. I hope you realize you are not old fashioned for thinking self control, temperance, modesty and virtue are good things. You are not crazy for believing children do best with a mother and father in the home. I really want you to know you are not alone in your beliefs. You are part of a remnant of believers who have been faithful to God and His word for hundreds and hundreds of years. The deceivers on the left want you to think that you are an outlier while painting their radical and immoral ideas as "normal." But here's the truth. Eight out of 10 Americans still believe in God and the Bible continues to be the world's best selling book of all time. "The light shines in the darkness, and darkness has not overcome it." John chapter 1, verse 5. Amen

Sharon

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Enjoy the PGA sipping on an Azalea

The 2023 PGA Tour is in full swing, and we are mere weeks away from the Masters at Augusta National set to tee off in April 6. The big story of last year's Masters was the return of the crowd after a two year absence.

Aside from the roar of the crowd, Scottie Scheffler's performance was the stuff of legend and I look forward to reliving the magic in the highlight reel ahead of this year's Tournament. Azaleas will bloom, pimento cheese sandwiches will be served, but this year the official cocktail of the Masters will be part refreshment, and perhaps part peace

offering. If you have followed pro golf over the last few years, or even if you have not, you may have heard of LIV, a rival professional golf tour financed by a Saudi Arabian investment fund. Some of the PGA's top talent defected from the PGA tour to join LIV including Phil Mickelson, Brooks Koepka, and Dustin Johnson. With two rival pro tours, which player will be regarded as the "best" pro golfer?

We may never find a way to objectively answer the question, but this year's Masters tournament will surely spark plenty of spirited debate among fans.

The PGA is allowing LIV players to attend majors, and the Masters will be the first time this season that golfers from the two rival tours will tee up alongside each other. LIV golfers recently received clearance to enter the Masters, and 17 of the upstart tour players were invited to play Augusta National in April.

At the end of the day, no single player is bigger than the game.

The Masters is an "invitation only" tournament, and



THE SUNDAY COCKTAIL
Brian Rung

National next month, I'll be happy.

That's enough controversy, let's pour the official cocktail of the Masters, the Azalea.

Why is the Azalea cocktail the official cocktail of the Masters? The Azalea cocktail is named for the iconic pink azalea's that line the #13 fairway, and the azaleas are the only things "pretty" about that particular hole if you are playing the course against the top players in the world. Augusta's 13th hole is a par 5, 510-yard hole that is regarded by many as one of the most difficult in the game.

It's unlikely that I will ever play Augusta National, but there's a good chance that each and every spring I will enjoy a delicious Azalea while taking in the action from my living room.

Augusta National is home

to over 30 varieties of azaleas, and they all seem to be in peak form around Tournament time. What is the best way to get the Azalea cocktail in the glass in peak form?

Before you prepare your Azalea, you have a big decision to make: vodka or gin?

The drink was originally made with gin, which is the preferred spirit of golf club bars around the world. I'm not sure why that is, but it is. If you prefer vodka, go ahead and use vodka. A quality gin will lend a unique blend of herbs and botanicals to the drink for more depth, whereas vodka will keep the sweet and sour fruit flavors in-tact without overpowering the drink.

This is a great "first" cocktail if you are new to mixology as it is made from common ingredients, and if you keep the proportions listed below in the ballpark the drink will be delicious.

Many fans of the Azalea like to go a bit heavy on the fresh lemon juice, while some prefer to skip lemon juice altogether in favor of fresh lime juice. Lemon juice is most commonly used when the drink is served in a commercial bar, I make a few of these a year at home and prefer lime juice.

Use a quality pineapple juice. At 2 oz. per drink, if your pineapple juice is subpar, then

your Azalea will be subpar. Dole Unsweetened Pineapple juice is the choice of most commercial bars because it is a dynamite mixer.

The "splash" of grenadine listed in the recipe below is usually around a teaspoon. It largely depends on the type of grenadine used and the desired color of your Azalea. If you look at pictures of Azalea cocktails online you will see a wide variety of reddish colors ranging from light pink to deep burgundy.

The bright red syrupy grenadine (Rose's) will yield a light red/pink cocktail, the deeper colored offerings from Sonoma Syrup co and Monin will darken the drink and bring some pomegranate notes to the Azalea as well.

The Azalea is built in a shaker and served over ice in a chilled Collins (tall) glass.

Combine in shaker:
1 oz. fresh lemon juice
2 oz pineapple juice
2 oz. vodka (or gin)
Splash of grenadine, add until desired color is achieved
Add ice to shaker
Shake and strain into chilled Collins glass over fresh ice

Garnish with orange wedge and cherry

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State of Illinois earns credit upgrade

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD – S&P Global Ratings announced Feb. 23 that it raised Illinois' long-term credit rating to A-, up from BBB+, marking the seventh upgrade the state has received from a major rating agency in less than two years.

The rating applies to roughly \$27.7 billion in outstanding general obligation, or GO bonds.

"The upgrade on the GO debt reflects our view that Illinois' commitment and execution to strengthen its budgetary flexibility and stability, supported by accelerating repayment of its liabilities, rebuilding its budget stabilization fund to decade highs; and a slowing of statutory pension funding growth, will likely continue during the outlook period," S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Geoff Buswick said in a news release.

Bonds are a tool that governments and businesses use to borrow money, typically for long-term capital projects such as building construction or other kinds of infrastructure. GO bonds are backed by the government's general taxing authority but other bonds may be backed by more specific revenue sources, such as sales or motor fuel taxes. Higher bond ratings generally mean the borrower – in this case

the state – pays lower interest rates.

Before the recent string of upgrades, all three major rating agencies – including Moody's Investors Service and Fitch Ratings – had rated Illinois' bonds at one notch above "junk" status, the point at which large institutional investors will no longer purchase them.

During the last two years, however, Illinois has used higher-than-expected revenues to pay off its backlog of past-due bills and retire other short-term debt early. In addition, it has set aside \$1.9 billion for the state's budget stabilization fund – commonly known as the "rainy day" fund – and the state is projected to deposit another \$138 million into that fund in the upcoming fiscal year, according to Gov. JB Pritzker's latest budget proposal.

"Our continued fiscal responsibility and smart budgeting will save Illinois taxpayers millions from adjusted interest rates, and my partners in the General Assembly and I look forward to building on that success," Pritzker said.

S&P credited the state's "deep and diverse economic base" as well as the state government's access to readily available cash, including the rainy day fund and untapped interfund borrowing authority. The agency also said it expects ongoing union contract negotiations to

be settled in a timely manner.

Offsetting those factors, S&P said, is the state's high unfunded pension and other postemployment benefit liabilities such as health care. The agency also dinged Illinois on its practice of releasing annual financial audits later than most other states and population declines, which it warned could impact future economic growth.

S&P said it could further upgrade Illinois' rating if the state continues paying down unfunded pension liabilities and building up its rainy day fund while shrinking its structural deficit.

On the other hand, S&P said it could downgrade the state's rating in the future if the structural deficit were to increase due to economic uncertainties or if its pension and other fixed-cost obligations exceed expectations.

Pritzker's recent budget proposal seeks to add an extra \$200 million to the pension fund beyond statutory levels for the current fiscal year.

For now, S&P said the state's near-term credit outlook is "stable."

In addition to upgrading the state's general obligation bond rating, S&P also raised its rating on the state's Build Illinois sales tax bonds to A, up from A-.

State Police squad car rear-ended on I-55

An Illinois State Trooper and his K9 companion escaped serious injury Monday morning after their squad car was struck on Interstate 55 in Joliet.

The officer was investigating a previous crash on the right shoulder of Interstate 55 northbound at Illinois Route 59, with emergency lights activated, when it was rear ended at approximately 7:46 a.m.

A silver 2018 Nissan Altima, traveling northbound

on Interstate 55, failed to yield to the stationary emergency vehicle and struck the left rear side of the ISP squad car.

The Trooper and K9 were inside the vehicle at the time of the crash. The Troop was transported to an area hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. The K9 was uninjured.

The driver of the Nissan, Tanner R. Poppenhager, 24, of Beardstown, IL, was issued a citation for: Scott's Law – Failure To Yield To Stationary Emergency Vehicle.

This is the sixth Move Over Law crash so far this year. In 2022, ISP had 23 Move Over Law-related crashes where eight Troopers sustained injuries.

ISP is reminding the pub-

lic of the requirements of the Move Over Law, otherwise known as "Scott's Law".

When approaching an emergency vehicle, or any vehicle with their emergency or hazard lights activated, drivers are required to slow down and move over. A person who violates Scott's Law, commits a business offense and faces a fine of no less than \$250 or more than \$10,000 for a first offense.

Spring cleanup at Braceville Gardner Cemetery

All grave decorations must be removed by March 15 or they will be discarded. Also, during the year, all wilted, faded and broken grave decorations will be removed. Garbage will be placed in containers located next to maintenance building.

Please do not replace decorations until the cleanup is completed.

Braceville Gardner Cemetery Association
Board of Directors

Speedway Solar project coming

ComEd has announced the opening of the 75th community solar development in its service territory, a 2.495 megawatt (MW) dubbed the Speedway Solar project.

The project will provide more than 350 ComEd customers with the benefits of solar energy and savings on their energy bills. The Speedway Solar project includes more than 2,300 solar panels and occupies 31 acres on West Sharp Road in Elwood.

By the end of this year, ComEd expects to have doubled the number of community solar projects interconnected to its electric grid to more than 150, serving approximately 36,000 customers!

2023 12U Wilmington Wildcats

EUCHRE NIGHT

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Play: 7:00 p.m.
\$20 to Play
\$10 to Spectate



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Any 12U Wildcat Family
Tuffy's Lounge

Lynx, porcupine featured in Mammal Madness

Celebrate the warm-blooded creatures around us during a Mammal Madness program from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, March 4, at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

One of the highlights of this Forest Preserve District of Will County program will be a free, all-ages live animal presentation at 11 a.m. by Big Run Wolf Ranch. The presentation will feature a Canada lynx, opossum, skunk and porcupine. There is room for 200 and seating will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

"Mammals are relatable, and they play such a large role in our native ecosystem that we should celebrate them as much as possible," said Jess McQuown, a program coordinator at Four Rivers. "We're all taught about dolphins in the oceans and elephants in Africa, but we have some incredible mammals right here in our own backyards and we wanted to share our excitement with everyone."

The big draw for the animal show will be the Canada lynx, said Alexis Lyons, an interpretive naturalist at Four Rivers.

"The Canada Lynx is a wild cat with large paws and long ear tufts," Lyons said. "They're about the size of a medium dog, standing 2.5 feet tall. We



A CANADA LYNX and three other mammals will be part of a presentation made by Big Run Wolf Ranch at the Forest Preserve District of Will County's Mammal Madness program on March 4 at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

are very thrilled to have this majestic animal visiting Four Rivers!"

Some of the animals that will be featured during the presentation have bad reputations, Lyons said.

"For instance, skunks have gotten a bad reputation from the foul-smelling musk they spray when frightened," she said. "Skunks provide many warning signs prior to spraying such as, hissing, raising its tail, puffing its fur and stamping its front feet. Skunks are generally quite easy-going and benefit our neighborhoods by eating

the insects and rodents that get into our homes and gardens."

In addition to the presentation by Big Run Wolf Ranch, which is a non-profit wildlife education facility in Homer Township, the event will feature other family-friendly activities.

"After the presentation, there will be mask-making in the craft room," McQuown said. "We'll have a puppet stage for families to bring their own mammal stories to life. There will be a show-and-tell space where families can

One day conference to address river issues

Organizers of the Kankakee River Watershed Conference said the time is now to restore the pristine waterway.

"Sand and sediment flow into the river are being caught by fallen trees forming sand bars, turning sand bars into islands and redirecting the flow of water" say conference organizers Frank Koehler, former Wilmington City Administrator, and Angel Crawford. "The time is now to address these challenges and protect the areas' greatest asset—the Kankakee River Watershed."

With the theme "The Time is Now", a one-day conference on the Kankakee River will be held on Friday, March 10, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the campus of Kankakee

Community College.

Issues that will be discussed include water quantity and quality, biodiversity, nutrients and agriculture, river recreation, watershed initiatives, and most importantly, sand and sediment.

There is no fee to attend, but individuals are asked to register online. Lunch and refreshments will be provided to attendees.

Registration and conference schedule are available at Kankakee Community College's Continuing Education. Course Detail: LECT-7045 - Kankakee River Watershed Conference.

The conference should be of interest to residents of Illinois and Indiana, particularly those in the Kankakee River, Iroquois River, and

Yellow River watersheds.

Wilmington City Administrator Jeannine Smith will give a presentation on local initiatives and members of the Will County Forest Preserve District will be presenting on sand and sediment projects.

For more information, email Koehler through the Potawatomi Paddlers Association Fjkoehler1952@gmail.com or Crawford from the Iroquois Economic Development Association at iedaillinois@gmail.vcom

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.

Library collecting used items for upcoming book sale

The Wilmington Public Library District will be holding a used book sale during the weekend of March 25 and March 26. The sale will run from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Saturday and from 12 p.m. until 4 p.m. on Sunday.

Books will be sold for \$3 a bag, and the library will provide the bag. Donations of

books and DVDs for the book sale will be accepted now through March 24.

The library kindly asked for books free of mold, dirt, and smoke damage. NO encyclopedias, VHS, National Geographics, outdated medical & text books or other obsolete materials will be accepted.

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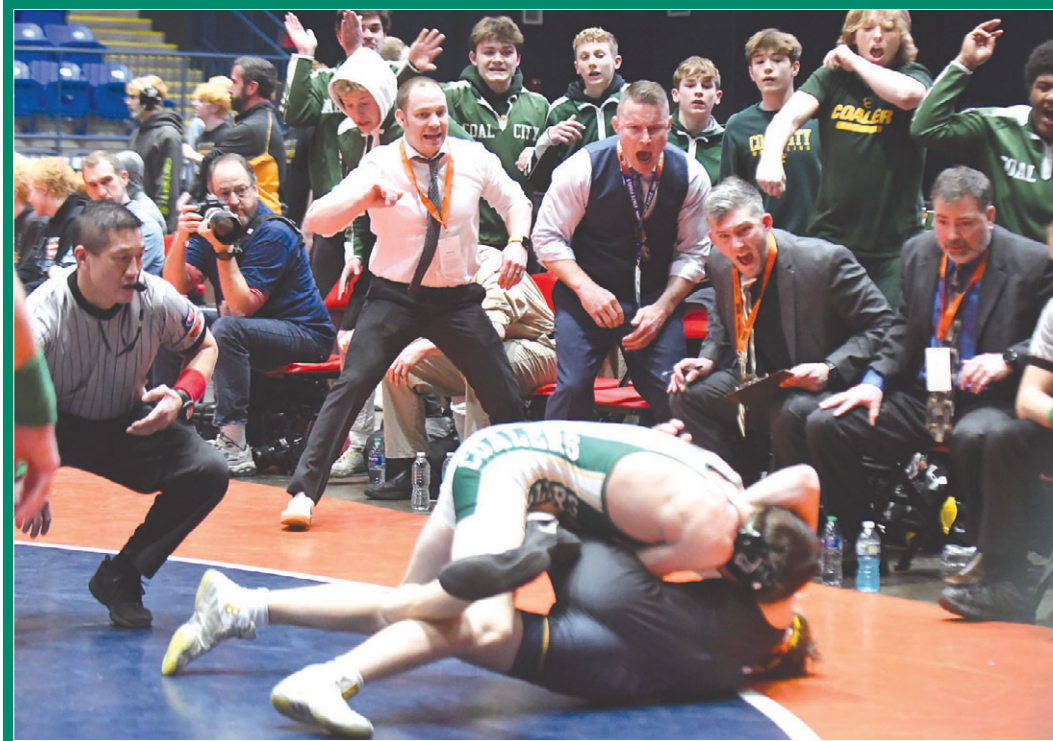


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Congratulations Coalers!



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Photos by Eric Fisher

AN EXCITING START - The first match of the battle for first place resulted in a 4-0 win for Coal City's Brock Finch at 126 pounds. He scores a two-point takedown over Yorkville Christian's Tristan Gleason, much to the delight of his coaches and teammates.



WHAT A BLESSING...as in Mataeo Blessing, who came out and pinned his opponent in :52 seconds to give the Coalers six big points over Yorkville Christian on Saturday. The Coal City senior won all three of his matches during the state dual finals, one of five Coalers to do so. Gotta love the reaction by coaches Joe Widlowski, Jim Looper and Mark Masters.



COAL CITY SENIOR Jack Poyner trips up Yorkville Christian's Tyler Martinez at 160 pounds.



JUST FOR YOU MOM! Coal City senior Derek Carlson points to the stands inside Grossinger Auto Arena in Bloomington, IL after singing the National Anthem to start the Dual Team wrestling championships.



COAL CITY SENIOR Braiden Young works on Mustang Jeremy Loomis during a 16-8 major decision at 182 pounds.

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ATTENTION COALER FANS
 Look in next week's paper for ordering the 2023 State Championship Coal City poster. Only pre-orders will be taken to save on the cost of shipping. Size will be 16x24 printed on quality cover stock. More details coming

USF spring dean's list

The University of St. Francis (USF) congratulates the following students who have been named to the dean's list for the spring 2022 semester. Students who have attained a grade point average of 3.5 or higher at the end of a semester in which they have taken at least twelve credit

hours. Local students include Rylee Glagola and Avery Hannig, of Coal City; Abigail Lab, of Elwood; Julia Santiago, of Gardner and Madison Gorges, Cameron Holman, Benjamin Kreitz and Dylan Spangler, all of Wilmington.

The importance of the sea turtle and what we can do to help them

Dear EarthTalk: How are populations of sea turtles faring these days?
-- A.J., Los Angeles, CA

Swimming alongside a sea turtle in coastal waters is certainly a thrilling sensation, but the experience is becoming increasingly harder to come by.

Declines in sea turtle populations around the world and in U.S. waters over recent decades is a sad reminder of all the environmental offenses that contribute to making the world's oceans less hospitable to these majestic, iconic reptiles.

Researchers estimate that since the dawn of the Industrial Age in the early 20th century, global sea turtle populations have decreased

EARTH TALK

Questions & Answers About Our Environment



SINCE THE DAWN of the Industrial Age, global sea turtle populations have decreased by 2/3, with only 6.5 million sea turtles left today.

by as much as two-thirds overall.

These days only about 6.5 million sea turtles roam the world's subtropical and tropical coastlines. Indeed, sea turtle populations are on the ropes:

Three out of the world's seven sea turtle species are considered "critically endangered" by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN); green sea turtle numbers have fallen by some 90 percent while Leatherbacks have lost 40 percent of their population.

Strict conservation measures are needed if we are to save these species outright. But why even care about the turtles? They might seem like any other sea creature, but they are actually vital to maintaining a balanced environment.

Turtles graze on seagrass meadows to regulate their growth and prevent them from suffocating. Unhatched eggs are also a vital source of nutrients to sand dunes, which allow vegetation to grow. So, if our turtle populations become too low, it will cause a chain reaction within the whole shoreline ecosystem.

Unfortunately, populations of sea turtles face myriad threats. For starters, sea turtles often mistake plastic bags for jellyfish, one of their favorite delicacies.

But this plastic can get stuck in the turtle's stomach, imitating their sensation of being full which causes them to not eat any actual food.

Researchers estimate some 52 percent of turtles have eaten some type of plastic.

With sea level rises, many beaches and even smaller barrier islands are disappearing. Turtles therefore become confused as to where to lay their eggs, potentially making it so that they don't lay any.

In addition, as reptiles, the gender of their hatchlings relies on temperature. Higher equals females, and lower equals males.

With global warming, beaches are warming up, drastically altering the male/female balance. This could potentially affect the breeding success of turtles, and contribute to the decline as well.

The federal Endangered Species Act already protects turtles by making it illegal to harm them in any way, and

provides resources to combat endangerment.

Environmentalists have also created new programs like the State of the World's Sea Turtles and the IUCN Turtle Specialist group which examine risk factors, data and potential conservation efforts.

Additionally, many volunteers come together during nesting and hatching season to protect and guide turtles.

And their efforts have not gone to waste; Leatherback turtle nests in and around U.S. waters are up from 27 in 1989 to 614 in 2014 thanks to protections enacted under the Endangered Species Act.

In addition, 3,960 nests have been counted on the Georgia Coast, a record for the state. By continuing to fund conservation efforts and with the help of volunteers, sea turtles can continue to thrive in the wild.

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org.

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Law would phase out subminimum wage for Illinois tipped workers

BY KEVIN BESSLER
THE CENTER SQUARE

In an effort to attract workers to the restaurant and bar business, some Illinois lawmakers are proposing hiking the wages of tipped staff.

Legislation has been filed that would phase in a full minimum wage for service workers in addition to their tips. At least a dozen other states are considering eliminating subminimum wages. Under federal law, some workers can be paid less than the minimum wage, such as tipped workers, students and disabled workers. Illinois' minimum wage is \$13 an hour. The state's subminimum is \$7.80 an hour for workers who get tips.

"When it comes down to it, to live on \$7.80 an hour is just not doable, it's not sustainable and frankly, its exploitative," said State Sen. Christine Pacione-Zayas, D-Chicago, the sponsor of Senate Bill 293.

The group advocating for the pay raise, One Fair Wage, says more than one in seven

Illinois workers have left the industry since last year, and over one third of workers who remain in the Illinois restaurant industry are considering leaving their job.

State Rep. Mike Coffey, R-Springfield, who owns a restaurant in Springfield, said the gratuity system that's in place has always worked just fine. If a tipped employee doesn't make a full minimum wage, the employer makes up the difference.

"They've got a system that works, they need to leave it alone," Coffey said. "They've got to quit going after and try-

ing to find out new ways to tax people and new regulations to hamper business."

Some are concerned that the higher wages will eventually affect menu prices. There is also a conversation about the effects on service if a worker isn't relying on tips.

"Just because you are now making what is technically defined as a livable wage doesn't mean that automatically makes you a jerk in terms of how you approach your job," Pacione-Zayas told The Center Square.

Today, 43 states use subminimum wages.

Veterans assistance available in Grundy County

The Edward Hines Jr. VA Medical Center Outreach Team and the Grundy County Veterans Assistance Commission, will make an outreach visit at the Morris American Legion, 212 W. Washington St., from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Monday, March 6.

The outreach team can assist veterans with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, along with veteran's benefits available from other agencies. This event is free and open to all veterans.

If a veteran is interested in enrollment in the VA Health Care System, bring a copy of their DD214 and a government issued photo ID. One may be eligible for VA health care benefits if they served in the active military, naval, or air service and didn't receive a dishonorable discharge.

Those who enlisted after Sept. 7, 1980, or entered active duty after Oct. 16, 1981, must have served 24 continuous months or the full period for which you were called to active duty. There are other conditions under which you might be eligible, attending these outreach events will allow you to discuss your situation with the enrollment coordinator directly.

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OBITUARIES

Darlene Baber

DIAMOND—Darlene Baber, 92, of Diamond, passed away Thursday, Feb. 23, 2023 at the Lightways Hospice Home in Joliet.

Born in Lorenzo, IL on April 9, 1930, Darlene was a daughter of Frank and Dominica "Minnie" (Fornelli) Gross. She was raised and educated in Coal City; graduated from Coal City High School with the class of 1948 and went on to attend Beauticians School. On April 18, 1953, Darlene married James A. Baber in Assumption Catholic Church and together they made a home and raised a family together.

Darlene worked as a beautician out of her home, and most recently at the nursing home in Wilmington until formally retiring at the age of 85. She was a member of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church in Coal City and served as the activities director at Country Meadows in Diamond for many years. She enjoyed flower gardening and baking, and cherished the time spent with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Survivors include her two daughters, Anita (Harold) Ryan, of Diamond and Cathy Thomas, of Joliet; five grandchildren: Timothy (Jen) Ryan, of Napa, CA; Jennifer (John) Endrst, of Coal City; Patrick Ryan (Kaity Weiland), of Chicago; Ashley Thomas, of Joliet and Matt (Jen Valadez) Thomas, of Riverside, IL; four great-grandchildren: Rylee Endrst, Ryan Endrst, Noah



Ryan and Cyrus Ryan; one sister-in-law, Adeline Hall, of Braidwood; special cousin, Rita Willis and special life-long friend, Jessie Kasher, both of Coal City.

Darlene was preceded in death by her parents, husband, James (1984); loving son-in-law, Charles Thomas and sister, Dorothy (Bill) Wollgast.

Funeral services were held Monday, Feb. 27, 2023 in Assumption Catholic Church in Coal City. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated with Reverend Jason Stone presiding and Deacon Bill Dunn Assisting.

Burial was in Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wilmington, where Darlene was laid to rest with her late husband and parents.

Pallbearers were: Patrick Ryan, Matt Thomas, Ryan Endrst, Bill Wollgast, Jeff Kasher and John Endrst. Honorary pallbearers were Tim Ryan, Jennifer Endrst and Ashley Thomas.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Darlene's memory to Candlelight Home Healthcare, 115 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL 60416 or Lightways Hospice.

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

Funeral services and arrangements were made under the direction and care of Reeves Funeral Homes, Ltd. in Coal City.

Sheila Hayden

CHICAGO—Sheila Hayden, 79, of Chicago, formerly of Wilmington, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023 at her residence.

Born Oct. 23, 1943 in Joliet, Sheila Catherine was a daughter of Thomas and Margaret (Kelly) Hayden. She was raised in Wilmington, attended Saint Rose Catholic School, and graduated from the Saint Francis Academy in Joliet. Sheila then left Wilmington at 18 for Chicago which she adopted as her hometown, and where she attended Moser Business College.

She worked in advertising as a commercial producer for Needham Harper & Steers in Chicago. Sheila worked with countless celebrities on television commercials, including sports stars like Michael Jordan, Walter Payton, and Barry Sanders. She also worked on all major television commercials for McDonalds. Sheila's professionalism and talent were acknowledged in 1982, when she received an ANDY Award of Excellence from the Advertising Club of New York City for her work.

Sheila was a devoted member of St. Patrick Catholic Church in Chicago, and supported Trinity Services and Misericordia School. She was also a member of the Chicago Yacht Club. Sheila was an artist at heart who went out of her way to support artists great and small. Local artists working in public parks would often catch her attention, and she would always take time to acknowledge and support their efforts. Sheila had a keen eye for photography and



especially enjoyed developing her own works. She remained close with her family and friends, who affectionately referred to her as "Hayden of Hollywood."

Survivors include her brother, Thomas P. Hayden, of Wilmington; nephew, Thomas M. Hayden, of Wilmington; best friend and cousin, Mary Fran O'Neil, of Seneca, SC; cousin, JC Kelly, of New Orleans, LA; and good friends and neighbors, Kitty and Kristy, of Chicago as well as numerous cousins. Sheila was preceded in death by her parents, Thomas and Margaret; brother, Michael Hayden and sister, Mary Ann Hayden.

The family will receive friends for a visitation on Wednesday, March 8, 2023 at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church, 604 S. Kankakee St., in Wilmington from 10 a.m. until the time of funeral services at 11 a.m. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated by Reverend Sebastian Gargol and assisted by Deacon Jay Plesse. Burial will follow the funeral at Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wilmington.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Sheila's memory to Misericordia School in Chicago or Trinity Services in Wilmington.

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

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

Betty Kusper

WILMINGTON—Betty Kusper, 69, of Wilmington, passed away Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2023 peacefully at her home.

Born Sept. 3, 1953 in Chicago, Betty was a daughter of Charles and Velma (Wellens) Ehlert. She was raised and educated in Chicago, where she graduated from Morton High School. She had lived previously in Morris, Darien and Clarendon Hills, IL. In 2007 she married Richard Keefe in Morris, and together they made a home in Wilmington.

Betty worked as a bartender for years, with The Step Up of Lyons, IL being her final place of employment. After seven years she retired from The Step Up in 1988. In her spare time Betty enjoyed antique shopping.

Survivors include her husband Richard; her mother, Velma, of Lyons; four children: Brian Tryba, of Melrose Park; Duane Tryba, of Lyons; Michael Kusper, of Wilmington and Kimberly



Kusper, of Joliet; one grandchild, Quinn Tryba and one sister, Linda (Jack) Adams, of West Plains, MO.

Betty was preceded in death by her father, Charles.

Cremation rites have been accorded and there will be private family services at a later date.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Betty's memory to the ASPCA for prevention of cruelty to animals.

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

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

Donna Goad

BRAIDWOOD—Donna Rae Goad (nee Gonis), 71, of Braidwood, passed away unexpectedly Friday, Feb. 24, 2023 at Morris Hospital.

Born July 6, 1951 in Joliet, she was the daughter of Harold and Charlotte Elaine (nee Goldsberry) Gonis. Donna loved her family and adored spending time with her grandchildren. She spent many days going on her daily walks around town and she previously enjoyed crocheting.

Surviving are her husband of 52 years, Larry Goad, of Braidwood, who she married Feb. 12, 1971; two daughters, Stacey (Bruce) Legg, of Diamond and Kelly Goad, of Plymouth Meeting, PA; step-son, Michael Goad, of Diamond; three grandchildren: Dylan and Kalie Legg and Kyle Goad; four brothers: Harold (Kathy) Gonis, of Braidwood; Robert (Anita) Gonis, of Wilmington; Kenneth Gonis, of Braidwood and Roger Gonis, of Braidwood; brothers-in-law, Gary Krug and Martin



Housman; sister-in-law, Shereena Gonis and numerous nieces, nephews, and their families.

Preceding her in death were her parents, Harold and Charlotte; two sisters, Doris Krug and Linda Housman and one brother, James Gonis.

Cremation rites have been accorded. Memorial visitation for Donna was held at the R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory on Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023.

Memorial donations in her name may be directed to any breast cancer charity of the donor's choice.

For more information and to visit her online guestbook, please log on to www.rwpatersonfuneralhomes.com or find them on Facebook.

R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory, 401 E. Main St., Braidwood was in charge of arrangements.

Rhonda Swanson

CHARLOTTE, FL—Rhonda (Lutes) Swanson, 54, of Port Charlotte, FL, formerly of Wilmington, passed away peacefully on Friday, Jan. 27, 2023 at Tampa General Hospital surrounded by her family.

Born June 9, 1968 in Joliet, Rhonda was the daughter of Trish (Craig) McKim and Norman Lutes. She was raised and educated in Wilmington where she attended Saint Rose Catholic School and graduated from Wilmington High School with the class of 1986. Following high school, Rhonda worked for the Hawthorne Race Course in Chicago. She also worked for the ExxonMobil Refinery in Channahon and assisted at power plants during outages, as well as for the Carpenters Local Union 174. There were not many things that Rhonda could not do, but she especially enjoyed working outside farming and in her garden, and raising chickens. She was very creative and loved to do handcrafts such as sewing. Rhonda loved family, and she was proud to be a loving mother and grandmother.

Survivors include her parents, Trish (Craig) McKim and Norman Lutes; three children:



Monique Waddell, Kenny Smith and Kenny Bannon; one granddaughter, Cadence Kent, with two more grandchildren expected in April; one brother, Michael "Shane" McKim and his children, Kirstyn, Katy and Brenan McKim; as well as several other nieces, nephews, cousins, aunts, and uncles.

Rhonda was preceded in death by two brothers, Tim and Russy McKim; two uncles, Mike Tinges and Doug Lutes, her maternal grandparents, Ken and Eleanor Tinges, and her paternal grandparents, Clyde and Elsie Lutes.

Cremation rites have been accorded and private services were held in Florida. A memorial service is being planned for a later date in Illinois.

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

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

Roger J. Johnson

WILMINGTON—Roger J. Johnson, 62, of Wilmington, passed away Sunday, Feb. 26, 2023 at his home.

The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation on Saturday, March 4, 2023 at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd., in Wilmington from 12 p.m. until the time of memorial service at 4 p.m. Roger will be laid to rest at Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Morris at a later date.

Family and friends are encouraged to



sign the online guest book and find full obituary as it becomes available on Roger's memorial page at www.BaskervilleFuneral.com. A full obituary will appear in next week's newspaper.

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

Paul Johnson

BRAIDWOOD—Paul Hugh Johnson, 78, of Braidwood, passed away on Feb. 11, 2023. He was born on July 22, 1944 in Manilla, AR, to Pauline Ruth and Paul Eldon Johnson.

Paul is survived by his three sons: Jeffery

Johnson and Jody Johnson, both of Braidwood and Jason Johnson, of Maryville, TN.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 54 years, Donna Kay Johnson.

Owen D. Webb

WILMINGTON—Owen D. Webb, 84, of Wilmington, passed away peacefully in his sleep on Monday, Feb. 27, 2023 at his home.

Born Sept. 10, 1938 in Effingham, IL, Owen Dean was a son of Ervin and Mildred (McKinnon) Webb. He was raised and educated in Effingham and graduated from Effingham High School with the class of 1956. Owen enlisted in the United States Navy and saw a lot of the world, including Turkey, Greece, Spain and served in Cuba during the Cuban Revolution. He married Margaret "Peggy" Starkey on Aug. 23, 1957 in Effingham. They relocated to Manhattan, IL and finally Wilmington in 1964.

He was employed at Statesville Prison, Celfibe in Wilmington, and then joined the Teamsters and worked at Rayburn Transportation Inc. in Wilmington, PT Ferro in Joliet, and also drove for Dan and Cindy Ragain. Owen, or the "Big O" or "Catfish," was larger than life and always had a hearty welcome for anybody he ran into. He was friendly with everyone and loved to talk about any subject, and usually had a strong opinion on whatever that subject was. Owen loved to play cards and did so for many years at the old and new Corner Tap. He really enjoyed his regular Friday night poker game with all of his poker buddies, and he was known to frequent the horse racing track and place a few wagers. Owen was involved in founding the Wilmington Bobcat Football Organization and would coach football, baseball, and softball for many years. He was also the president of the Wilmington Booster Club. Owen was a faithful Wilmington Wildcat Fan and loved watching his children and grandchildren compete in all of the various sports. As he got older, his attention turned to his great-grandchildren and following them on the softball field. He also enjoyed his visits to his family in Arizona and talking to them on the phone. Owen was also an avid St. Louis Cardinal fan, naturally leading to his dislike of the Chicago Cubs.

He was a loving and faithful husband to Peggy for 54 years. They were inseparable, and if



you saw one of them you usually saw the other one. He was a loving father to Vonda, Tonya and Kevin, as well as brother, grandfather "Papa" and great-grandfather to his entire family, almost always putting their needs ahead of his own.

Owen is survived by two children, Tonya (Ken) Hagemeyer, of Glendale, AZ and Kevin (Paula) Webb, of Wilmington; grandchildren: Dale Smith, Derek (Tiffany) Smith, Dustin Smith, Nicole (Michael) Moran, Lindsay Hagemeyer, Jordan Hagemeyer, Colin (Ashley) Webb, and Emily (Mike) Harrington; great-grandchildren: Kendall, Kali, Kloe, Richie, Eli, Silas and Spencer; brother, Ronald "Ed" Webb, of Connecticut; sister, Mildred "Diane" Horath, of Florida and special friend, Louie Fox, of Joliet.

Owen was preceded in death by his parents, Ervin and Mildred Webb; his wife, Peggy Webb; two children, Vonda Smith and infant son, Keith Webb; son-in-law, Gary Smith and two brothers, Dale Webb and Joe Webb.

Cremation rites are being accorded, and the family will receive friends for a memorial visitation on Friday, March 3, 2023 at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd., in Wilmington from 4 until 7 p.m., with Masonic Funeral Rites to take place at 7 p.m.

Owen will be laid to rest at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood on Monday, March 6, 2023. Those wishing to attend are welcome to assemble at the funeral home on Monday morning beginning at 11 a.m. for a procession, which will depart at 11:30 a.m. Committal services with full military honors are scheduled at 12 p.m.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Owen's memory to the charity of the donor's choosing.

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

Cremation services and memorial arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 East Kahler Road, in Wilmington.

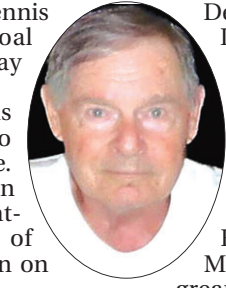
Dennis W. VanDuyne

COAL VALLEY, IL—Dennis W. VanDuyne, 88, of Coal Valley, IL passed away Monday, Feb. 27, 2023.

Dennis William VanDuyne was born Nov. 3, 1934 in Wilmington, to Peter and Gertrude (Glass) VanDuyne. He served in the U.S. Army and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in accounting/finance from the University of Illinois. He married Shirley McClellan on Dec. 7, 1965 in Joliet.

Dennis worked as an accountant for the Federal Government retiring from the Rock Island Arsenal after 30 years of services. He enjoyed gardening, planting trees, music and running the Bix. He was an avid Bulls, Fighting Illini, and White Sox fan. Above all else, family was the most important thing to Dennis. He and his wife, Shirley enjoyed 25 years in Florida after their retirements. He loved spending time in his hometown of Wilmington visiting relatives and reminiscing about the adventures of his youth. His children and grandchildren especially loved listening to these stories.

Dennis is survived by his wife, Shirley; eight children: Kelly (Jess Howard) Shaw, of Galesburg; Michele (Kevin) McVitty, of Orion;



Dennis (Rebecca) VanDuyne, of Driggs, ID; Nancy (Paul) Hancock, of Orion; Beth VanDuyne, of Pittsboro, IN; Peggy VanDuyne, of Portland, OR; Alan (Kimberley) VanDuyne, of Lynn Center and Jeffrey VanDuyne, of Coal Valley; 20 grandchildren: Tara, Ross, Morgan, Andrew, Nathan, Emily, Austin, Samuel, Benjamin, Abigail, Rachel, Ryan, Tate, Cade, C.J., Raegan, Mallary, Hayley, Maya and Elyse; five great-grandchildren; sisters-in-law, Margaret and Martina VanDuyne and many nieces, nephews, and close friends, including his neighbors of 48 years.

He was preceded in death by his parents and 14 siblings. He is now reunited with them all and loved them dearly.

Visitation is 4-7 p.m. Friday, March 3 at Trimble Funeral Home, Coal Valley, beginning with a prayer service at 3:30 p.m. A Mass of Christian Burial is at 11 a.m. Saturday, March 4 at St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church, Coal Valley, with additional visitation from 10 a.m. until time of service. Burial is in Coal Valley Cemetery. Memorials may be made to the church or Food for the Poor.

Cemetery clean-up is Saturday

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.

Gather electronics, string lights for recycling

Will County's free electronics drop-off event will be held Thursday, March 9, from 5-7 p.m. at the Wilmington City Hall parking lot, 1165 S. Water St.

Holiday string lights that are no longer working may be dropped off for recycling. This is for string lights only, no stand alone LEDs, CFLs or other fluorescent lights.

Participants are reminded to remain in their vehicles at all times, show ID by holding it to the window for staff to see and then allow staff to remove items without assistance from each vehicle.

Items accepted include: Televisions (limit 2), monitors, printers, computers (desktops, laptops, notebooks, tablets),

electronic keyboards, fax machines, videocassette recorders, portable digital music players, DVD players, DVD recorders, video game consoles, small scale servers, scanners, electronic mice, digital converter boxes, cable receivers, satellite receivers, cell phones, computer cable, portable digital assistants (PDAs) and zip drives.

Electronic items contain materials that can be recycled countless times while other materials in items are considered hazardous.

The recycling takes place in Wilmington the second Thursday of each month. An ID showing Will County residency may be required.

Impending Medicaid changes could leave hundreds of thousands uninsured

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD—As many as 700,000 Illinoisans may lose Medicaid coverage in the months following March 31, but the Department of Healthcare and Family Services says it is working to reduce that number and help those affected find health insurance elsewhere.

Medicaid is a health insurance program for poor and disabled people that is jointly funded by the federal government and the states.

Congress passed a spending bill in December that puts a March 31 end to a pandemic-era rule that paid states that kept Medicaid patients continuously enrolled in the program through the end of the public health emergency.

Those individuals did not have to go through the normal process of reapplying every 12 months to determine whether they were eligible, even if there were changes in their income or household that would normally make them ineligible.

The change in law means many who have been receiving continuous coverage will have to reapply for benefits, potentially leading to loss of coverage if the individual would no longer qualify for benefits or if they fail to complete a reapplication.

Nationwide, the federal government estimates that 15 million people, or 17.4% of Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program enrollees, will lose their coverage as a result of the change. That would translate to roughly 700,000 people in Illinois, but DHFS officials believe they

can mitigate the impact to "roughly 384,000" individuals through outreach efforts.

The department also noted that those individuals will be subject to redetermination over a staggered timeline over the next 12 months, not all at once when the program ends.

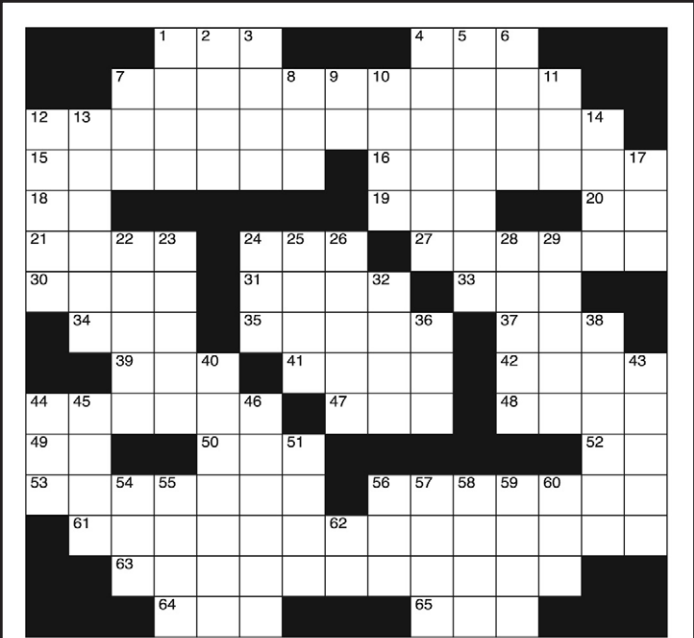
"The truth is, nobody knows for sure. What we do know is that we are committed to ensuring everyone who is eligible maintains their coverage, and that those who are not are given information about alternative coverage," DHFS spokesperson Jamie Munks said in an email.

To avoid losing coverage, DHFS strongly urges Medicaid enrollees to fill out their renewal forms as soon as possible. The agency will resume regular verifications starting in late April, and people with a

June renewal date will be the first to go through the restart process. Those people will need to submit their renewal forms before June 1 so they can maintain coverage.

Customers can complete their renewal by phone, although online is the preferred method. She also said it is important for enrollees to update their contact information with the Medicaid program.

Munks said people who are found to be ineligible may still have other options for low-cost insurance, including individual plans sold through the Affordable Care Act marketplace, Get Covered Illinois. People who meet certain income guidelines can receive tax credits to pay all or part of their premiums.



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Relaxing place
- 4. Plant by scattering
- 7. A type of explorer
- 12. Unique traits
- 15. Lady
- 16. Dismayed
- 18. Railway
- 19. Type of whale
- 20. Sodium
- 21. Manning and Lilly are two
- 24. Where golfers begin
- 27. Entrapped
- 30. Influential punk artist
- 31. Hebrew calendar month
- 33. Car mechanics group
- 34. Undesirable rodent
- 35. Minneapolis suburb
- 37. Witch
- 39. Get free of
- 41. A written proposal or reminder
- 42. British School
- 44. Country on west coast of Africa
- 47. Cool!
- 48. Information
- 49. _ route
- 50. Jim Nantz's network
- 52. Something to register (abbr.)
- 53. Give cards incorrectly
- 56. One who's learning on the job
- 61. Stevenson adventure novel
- 63. Taking careful notice
- 64. CNN's founder
- 65. Speak badly of

CLUES DOWN

- 1. A person with unusual powers of foresight
- 2. Single sheet of glass
- 3. Portrays a character
- 4. Expresses happiness
- 5. Acquires
- 6. "The Martian" author
- 7. Degree
- 8. 60-minute intervals
- 9. A detective's pal
- 10. Group of nations (abbr.)
- 11. Popular Georgia rockers
- 12. Fencing swords
- 13. Basement
- 14. Samoan monetary unit
- 17. Male parent
- 22. Finnish lake
- 23. A smooth fabric
- 24. Arctic explorers (abbr.)
- 25. Mild yellow Dutch cheese
- 26. Very willing
- 28. Expressed pleasure
- 29. Lasso
- 32. Hindu model of ideal man
- 36. Move your head in approval
- 38. Ill-_: gained illegally
- 40. Die
- 43. Accused publicly
- 44. Precious stone
- 45. Individual thing or person
- 46. Behaved in a way that degraded
- 51. Derogatory term
- 54. No seats available
- 55. Liability
- 56. Popular beverage
- 57. Tough outer skin of fruit
- 58. _ Spumante (Italian wine)
- 59. Troubles
- 60. Negative
- 62. Camper

Pritzker launches children's behavioral health initiative

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD - Citing what he called a nationwide crisis in children's mental health, Gov. JB Pritzker on Feb. 24 unveiled a sweeping plan to overhaul and expand the availability of children's behavioral health services in Illinois.

"Long before COVID-19 turned our world upside down, our nation was facing a mental health crisis," Pritzker said at an event at the West40 Regional Safe School in the west Chicago suburb of Maywood. "Nearly one in five children experienced a mental health disorder, from depression to anxiety to ADHD. But only 20% of them received the behavioral health care that they needed."

In March of last year, Pritzker launched what was called the Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative, a project that involved six state agencies and other outside

entities that deal with children's mental health. Its task was to build a coordinated, interagency approach to ensuring young people with significant behavioral health needs receive the community and residential services they need.

The results of that effort were released in a recent report that examined data from multiple state agencies to assess the need for services, determine which populations are most affected by the crisis and come up with a plan for coordinating state resources to meet those needs.

"It's a blueprint for transformation of the behavioral health system for Illinois' youth," Pritzker said. "This is an unprecedented interagency effort that will provide more and better treatment and save lives."

Although a recent study by Mental Health America found Illinois ranks 13th-best overall on a set of factors related to youth mental health

care, the Transformation Initiative analysis found that 40 percent of young people in Illinois who experienced major depressive episodes were unable to receive mental health care.

Youth in care of the Department of Children and Family Services who need inpatient residential treatment for their condition are disproportionately Black, the report found. As well, the report found a quarter of all the beds at residential treatment facilities are unavailable due to understaffing.

It also found that the state has a fragmented system of delivering mental and behavioral health services, with different state agencies providing services under different standards and often paying different reimbursement rates for similar services.

"Multiple state agencies operate programs that provide services to support children's behavioral health, but there is minimal systematic coordination and no holistic, developmentally informed approach to meeting youth needs," the report stated. "With no central point of entry to help families navigate, children and families must access services differently across agencies, meet agency-specific eligibility requirements, and maintain access to services with minimal supports."

To address that issue, Pritzker said, the Transformation Initiative developed and pilot tested a new online portal where people seeking assistance for youth could connect with the services they need. He described it as "a kind of a front door for stakeholders seeking assistance for youth with the greatest needs."

As of Jan. 30, after only a few months of operation, Pritzker said, 41% of the cases that came through that portal had already been connected with interventions, place-

ments and services.

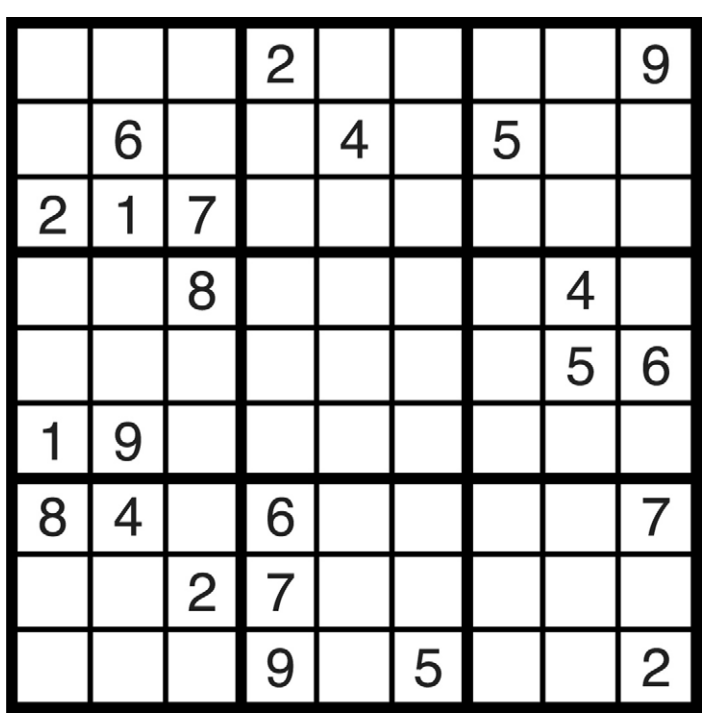
"So with a successful pilot underway and under our belt, we are now going to build out this more robust care portal for children and families seeking behavioral health services," he said. "And we're adding to it a hotline for assistance and specialized guidance for those beginning the process of accessing care."

The Transformation Initiative report also spells several other recommendations for improving services. Those include standardizing reimbursement rates for services so providers are compensated consistently; offering universal screening in schools and health care settings for behavioral health problems so they are detected early; and expanding eligibility for current programs and developing new service types.

"Our ability to provide the behavioral health support that we desperately need for our kids and adults hinges on growing our behavioral healthcare workforce. We have to do it," state Representative Lindsey LaPointe, D-Chicago, a former social worker, said during the event.

As part of his budget proposal released last week, Pritzker asked for \$22.8 million to begin to fund and implement the Transformation Initiative's recommendations.

Also on Friday, Pritzker signed an executive order establishing a new office of Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative Chief to lead the interagency effort to implement that plan. At the event in Maywood, he announced that Dana Weiner, a child welfare expert at the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall who chaired the Transformation Initiative, would fill that role.



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State Democrats targeting school board candidates

Gov. JB Pritzker told reporters a few weeks ago that he was concerned about some local school and library board races.

"There are organizations that are anti-LGBTQ, that are racist, they're anti Muslim, that are supporting candidates for these local boards. And they're trying to take over at a local level and build up candidates at the local level that they can then run for the state legislature and for other offices."

Far-right groups like Awake Illinois morphed from fighting school-based COVID mitigations into battling so-called "woke" ideas like Critical Race Theory (which isn't taught anywhere), sex education and local drag story-reading. The group once referred to Pritzker as a "groomer."

Awake Illinois claimed last week that they've identified more than 70 candidates, although the group's political committee reported having just \$100 in cash in January and it often grossly exaggerates its real-life prowess.

But the environment out there is hot right now, with national activists like Charlie Kirk holding local events and stirring up passions. The Illinois Policy Institute has a private "Parents Union" Facebook group that focuses on school board elections and sharing information and ginning people up as much as possible.

Local Republican Party organizations are also jumping

into races, including in McLean County, which has become a hotbed of radicalization. Palatine's high school district is also attracting local GOP assistance, where some residents are up in arms about the local school board adopting sex education standards. "Together we can gain a majority on the board and put a stop to the sexualization of children in our schools," read one recent door-hanger.

When told of local Republican Party support for some of these candidates and asked what he intended to do about it, Pritzker said, "We are supporting candidates that are standing up for freedom." But with an April 4th election date looming, that plan hadn't yet been in plain sight.

The plan is now coming into more focus. The Democratic Party of Illinois began by initially looking at 400-some races and then identifying more than 100 what they call "fringe" candidates in 60 different school board districts. All of those districts and most of those candidates will be targeted in what party officials say will be a "robust" campaign.

"It's going to be very much a voter education program," explained a Democratic Party



CAPITOL FACTS
Rich Miller

of Illinois official. The state party will be "shedding light on the fact that there are candidates supported by these national extremist groups that are on their ballot."

"We want to make investments that actually have some real effect at spreading the word about these extremists candidates," the official said.

The party's preferred candidates will receive on-the-ground help, like "cutting turf" for door-to-door canvassers. But they'll also receive assistance with their messaging, plus the state party will sponsor or help with direct mail and digital ads, as well as opposition research.

The state party has been working on this plan for weeks and has reached out to local county parties, state central committee members, grassroots groups and unions (mainly the teachers and AFSCME), not only for help with candidates and identifying the radicals, but also with knowledge of important issues in the targeted districts.

These races are not partisan in the traditional sense because candidates often run on local slates. So, mailers paid for by the Democratic Party of Illinois could generate a backlash. But DPI is saying that

they'll mainly be communicating "to a base audience" of fellow Democrats. The party also says they'll be deferring to local "partners" on "where to be involved louder than other areas."

"A lot of these people, this was their first time running for office," the party official said. While some have political experience, they are, "looking for some guidance on how to structure their campaign, what kind of timeline to follow, how to target voters. So, we're providing them with that sort of campaign expertise."

Without intervention, the party official said, "We could easily see ourselves electing numerous extremist folks to these positions that have a ton of power."

"Our values are on the line," the official claimed.

This is an unprecedented move, but perhaps we're in unprecedented times. And it's exactly the sort of thing the governor has been saying for years that the state party should be focusing on: Building the party up from the bottom and focusing resources on much more than legislative and statewide contests.

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

CC United Methodist to host blood drive

Coal City United Methodist Church, 6805 E. McArdle Road in Coal City, will host a Community Blood Drive in conjunction with Versiti Blood Center on Tuesday, March 7, from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Anyone willing to donate blood can contact Karen Hart at 708-217-5808

to schedule a preferred time or you may register online at www.versiti.org.

Walk-ins are also welcome, but appointments are recommended. Please bring a photo ID and eat a good meal before donating. Please consider giving blood - one pint of blood can save up to 3 lives.

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Local price drops but statewide gas rises

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have risen 2.4 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.51/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

But locally on Monday prices dropped as much as 13 cents per gallon in Braidwood over the week before, 8 cents/g in Wilmington and 7 cents/g in Coal City. Average prices were \$3.36, \$3.40 and \$3.58, respectively.

Prices in Illinois are 15.6 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 33.5 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

"The national average has resumed its decline after a pause last week as oil and wholesale gasoline prices fell on worrisome inflation figures showing the Fed likely to ramp up rates to slow inflation," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"Some nine out of 10 states saw declines

over the last week, so the drops are showing up for most across the country, with the exception of the West Coast as the transition to summer blends continues, and in the Great Lakes, where prices cycled last week but have now resumed declining."

The national average price of diesel has fallen 7.7 cents to \$4.38 per gallon.

The lowest price in the state was \$2.95/g while the highest was \$4.79/g, a difference of \$1.84/g. The national average price of gasoline is \$3.33/g.

"For the weeks ahead, tradition tells us to expect prices to move up eventually, but that could be at least be partially offset by inflationary data that continues to be hotter than expected, leading to anxiety that the Fed will boost interest rates and cooling the economy and oil demand considerably," said De Haan.



Front Row: Grace Smith, Dayna Vargocko, Samantha Olson.
Back Row: Sherry Yakima, Dr. Garrett B. Smith, Sara Daniels and Kelly Olson

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COALER SPORTS

Coalers 'destine for greatness' are state champs

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

Eleven times Coal City's wrestling team advanced to the IHSA Dual Team State tournament without placing first.

That changed on Saturday when Coal City edged Yorkville Christian, 32-31, to claim the state championship in Bloomington.

Yorkville Christian, the defending 1A champions, upset the Coalers in the Seneca Regional a year ago. This time the stars aligned for Coal City in a back-and-forth contest that ended with the Coalers entering the final match with a 7-point lead and able to default and still win.

There were plenty of heroes Saturday on the Coal City side of the mat. They included Mataeo Blessing (145), Michael Gonzalez (285) and Brody Widlowski (113) who lifted the Coalers with 6-point pins. Critical too were the 4-point major decisions by Braiden Young (182) and Joey Breneman (195). But the most unsung hero for Coal City may have been senior Jack Poyner (160) who almost got pinned but held off Christian's Tyler Martinez, third in individual state, to give up four points instead of six.

"Everybody's always about living a life of comfort but not these guys. They were built for greatness," said coach Mark Masters. "They had a great team unit. It's a special group obviously, to be able to do what they did."

What they did was to better what 11 Coaler teams could not do before. Six times Coal City settled for second place, twice as third place trophy winners, once in fourth place and two times not placing at all.

"They're a great senior class. I couldn't be more proud of those guys...high class, high character kids," Masters commented. "They did a great job leading our program, all the way from our youth program. This all started 10 years ago when many of them were Little Coalers. We've had the right coaches in the right places throughout these kids' careers and I am happy for them."

The championship bout began at 126 pounds where Brock Finch shutout his opponent 4-0 to give the Coalers a 3-0 lead.

Jake Piatak stayed within striking distance at 132, giving Christian's Noah Dial everything he had through three periods before falling 4-3. That tied the score at 3-3.

Brant Widlowski got Coal City back in front 6-3 with a 6-4 decision at 138.

That's when Blessing, a senior, gave the Coalers their first fall. He stuck it to Yorkville's John Isaac Gray in :52, charging up his teammates and a sizable Coaler crowd.

"All I was thinking when I stepped out there was to get the job done as fast as I can to get momentum for the rest of the guys coming up," commented Blessing. "I expected this at the beginning of the year and there was motivation all the way to the end to beat these guys. Ever since Yorkville Christian beat us last year during regionals the first day back for practice our coaches told us we were coming back for them. Then it ends up happening, we meet them for the championship, and we kept telling ourselves it's not happening again. So the motivation was there all season."

At 152, Landin Benson was in a 2-2 battle with Mustang Drew Torza when overtime was needed. Torza got an escape to win it 3-2, cutting into the Coaler lead 12-6.

That's when Poyner, a 36-14 state qualifier, battled Martinez a 45-7 third place medalist at 152. Poyner muscled his way out of being pinned in an 8-0 loss making the score Coal City 12, Yorkville 10.

At 170, Coaler senior Derek Carlson (37-8) may have lost 6-2 to state runner-up Jackson Gillen (43-7) but in the end it was a victory of sorts. Gillen had beaten Carlson by 12-4 major decision a week earlier during the individual finals. Instead of gaining four points, Carlson made it three for Yorkville as they took the lead 13-12.

If Poyner was the unsung hero, Carlson was the sung hero.

Carlson, a four-year study of theater at CCHS, surprised many by standing solo at center mat to sing the National Anthem to start the night. His crooning was right on key, ending with a finger-point into the mob of fans where his mother was seated.

"I'm more nervous about singing the National Anthem than wrestling," Carlson said beforehand "I thought it would be cool to be a wrestler in the finals to be the one singing the National Anthem. We emailed the IHSA a couple weeks ago and they said sure, they'd love to have me do it. It's something I'll always remember, to sing to such a large crowd and then turn around and wrestle in front of

them. I'm not sure if any wrestler has done that before but I hope I'm the first."

He ended the interview an hour before taking the microphone by saying, "And don't tell my mom, she doesn't know."

Braiden Young (182) got the Coalers back in front 16-13 with a major 16-8 decision. Then Joey Breneman (195) followed suit with his 10-0 major to build the Coaler lead to 20-13.

"I'll give a lot of credit to our 182 and 195 guys," praised coach Masters. "Braiden and Joey coming up with bonus points with seconds left on the clock was huge for us. That certainly was a deciding factor."

Breneman, who twice almost got the pin, said afterwards he was ready to go home to celebrate with family and friends.

"It's great that we are the state champions but yet it's a little disheartening knowing this was our last match together," Breneman said. "Every time we stepped on the mat, someone was trying to take us off our throne. This time we did it to Yorkville Christian, they were tough. I think we all had the mindset we were going to beat them and we did."

At 220, Drake Dearth was surprised with a :43 fall by Jackson Mehochko to close Coal City's lead to 20-19.

Thankfully senior Michael Gonzalez took it to his opponent at 285, pinning Garrett Tunnell in 1:11 to grow Coal C y's lead to 26-19.

"Mike's a high energy guy. He doesn't let anything faze him. He goes out and his fights are just explosive. You don't see too many heavyweights shooting double legs and blasts right off the bat. He knew what we needed and he came through," Masters said.

But Yorkville Christian made things interesting with three weights left. They got a 3:38 fall at 106 when Aiden Larson turned Coaler freshman Culan Lindemuth to trail just 26-25.

Next up was Brody Widlowski at 113. Masters said he looked at the two remaining matches thinking they had to get at least one pin. Brody lived up to that expectation, sticking Eli Foster to the mat at the 1:36 mark, causing celebration.

"It was great to see Brody win it for us in that fashion. We pin, it's over. He went out just as calm as could be, executed and put them away," Masters said.

"We told them beforehand it was just a regular



Photo by Eric Fisher

UPLIFTING WIN - Coach Mark Masters embraced then lifted Brody Widlowski high after the Coal City freshman got a pin at 113 pounds, giving the Coalers enough points to beat Yorkville Christian 32-31 to claim the state championship.

match, you just gotta be you. It's the same 28-foot circle like they have a practice at home. Don't make it any bigger than what it is. And that's exactly what they did. Obviously the outcome was going to be a little bit bigger, but nobody backed down. We saw our guys were pushing harder the entire time and I'm proud of

them," Masters said. To get to the championship Coal City beat LeRoy in the quarterfinals on Friday 65-6 and then upended Lena-Winslow 46-14 in the semifinal Saturday morning.

The Coalers finish the season with only two losses in 45 meets, the best record since 1998 when as state runners-

up they went 21-2 under coach Brett Porter. This team won the Able's Rumble trophy, the Princeton Tournament, ICE Conference and regional trophies.

The Coalers graduate 10 starting seniors but there are already underclassmen in the ranks ready to fill several of those positions.



Photo by Eric Fisher

ALMOST THERE—Coal City's Joey Breneman locks up on Mustang Christopher Durbin at 195 pounds on Saturday, getting a three-point near-fall during a 10-0 major decision, giving the Coalers a bonus point as they won 32-31.

Warriors crown 10 champions at regional



THE WRESTLING WARRIORS competed in Regionals over the weekend and walked away with the championship scoring 438 points. Second place was Herscher with 206 points. A total of 22 wrestlers qualify for sectionals and 10 Warriors were crowned champions. Champs were Ryder Gill, Landon Bomba, Jake Munsterman, Jason Piatak, Owen Petersen, Cooper Morris, Alex Carlson, Theo Fritz, Aidan Edmonds, and Brody D'Orazio. Runner-ups were Brantly Brooks, Tyson Price, Fabian Hernandez, Carter Teague, Cole Russell and Chris Groves. Third place went to Cameron Minuth, Gavin Clubb, Gabe Hamilton, Enzo Mugnolo, Bobby Stoudt, and Gavin Roudis. Just missing out on Sectionals and finishing in 4th were Jacob Moore, Tanner Gullquist, and Phoenix Senodenos. Front (from left) Owen Petersen, Ryder Gill, Jake Munsterman and Gabe Hamilton. Middle row: Gavin Roudis, Bobby Stoudt, Eathyn Rivera, Kory Lovell, Landon Bomba, Cooper Morris, Brantly Brooks, Tyson Price and Jason Piatak. Back row: Coach Petersen, Coach Rodriguez, Cameron Minuth, Carter Teague, Enzo Mugnolo, Cole Russell, Connor Rodriguez, Kal Hogan, Aidan Edmonds, Alex Carlson, Brody B'Orazio, Theo Fritz, Gavin Clubb, Fabian Hernandez, Coach Rivera, Nora Minuth and Coach Morris.

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Class 1A state championship match results
Coal City 32, Yorkville Christian 31

126—Brock Finch (CC) over Tristan Gleason, decision 4-0
132—Noah Dial (YC) over Jake Piatak, decision 4-3
138—Brant Widlowski (CC) over Grason Johnson, decision 6-4
145—Mataeo Blessing (CC) over John Isaac Gray, fall 0:52
152—Drew Torza (YC) over Landin Benson, UTB 3-2
160—Tyler Martinez (YC) over Jack Poyner, major 8-0
170—Jackson Gillen (YC) over Derek Carlson, decision 6-2
182—Braiden Young (CC) over Jeremy Loomis, major 16-8
195—Joey Breneman (CC) over Christopher Durbin, major 10-0
220—Jackson Mehochko (YC) over Drake Dearth, fall 0:43
285—Michael Gonzalez (CC) over Garrett Tunnell, fall 1:11
106—Aiden Larsen (YC) over Culan Lindemuth, fall 3:38
113—Brody Widlowski (CC) over Eli Foster, fall 1:36
120—Ty Edwards (YC) by forfeit

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2023 IHSA CLASS 1A DUAL TEAM

STATE CHAMPIONS

STATE CHAMPIONS! The Coal City wrestling team took first place in the Class 1A Dual Team state finals Saturday, Feb. 25 in Bloomington, IL, beating Yorville Christian, 32-31. Team members include (seated, from left) Drake Stewart, Zakk Kramer, Rey Gonzalez, Trace Wilson, Jocie Widlowski, Jaela Vasquez and Addison Harvey. Kneeling are Tyler Porth, Joey Breneman, Jake Piatak, Jack Poyner, Andrew Feisley, Braiden Young, Drake Dearth, Michael Gonzalez, Derek Carlson, Mateo Blessing and Coach Joe Widlowski. Standing are Coach Mark Masters, Coach Bob McGuinn, Culan Lindemuth, Coach Jim Looper, Brock Finch, Luke Munsterman, Brody Widlowski, Alec Waliczek, Payton Vigna, Noah Houston, Devin Dearth, Mason Garner, Evan Greggain, Cade Poyner, Buddy Widlowski, Landin Benson, Coach Nick O'Bert, Coach Greg Keigher and Coach Zach Berman.