

Unit 1 honors its Students of the Week



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Tentative budget outlines increase in revenue, expenses

BY ANN GILL EDITOR

As a new budget year approaches for the village of Coal City, town leaders will be spending time over the next three weeks reviewing the details of the 2024 spending plan.

In its tentative form, the budget for the upcoming fiscal year—effective May 1—is \$15.4 million, an increase of 16% from the current year.

“Overall expenditures are up, but so are revenues,” Village Administrator Matt Fritz said.

Anticipated revenues for 2024 are tallied at \$13.39 million, up \$1.3 million from the \$12 million budgeted for fiscal year 2023.

Fritz said the tentative budget revenues include American Rescue Plan [ARP] dollars that will be expended in the coming year on a water main project.

“There are plenty of projects happening in other departments, we are doing what we can to improve the village across all departments,” the administrator said.

The tentative budget includes scheduled projects, required expenses and requests from the various departments.

“We go through a process of meeting with department heads and discussing the budgets and that is what we will be doing over the next few Wednesdays,” Fritz said.

The first budget hearing is set for tonight, Wednesday, March 15, and will focus on the police department and emergency service and disaster agency [EMA].

Additional meetings will address administration, parks and public works—water and sewer.

The annual budget meetings also serve as a time that the Village Board takes a look at utility rates and determines if increases are needed to sustain the system.

“We’re trying to reduce some of the fees as we are moving forward with these projects and utilize some of the tax increment financing. All of that is in here and we will talk about it over the next three weeks,” Fritz told trustees

last week.

The budget presented to the Board calls for the utilization of \$1.1 million in TIF funding for qualified projects.

Details concerning the various projects and departmental requests will be addressed during the budget meetings, as well as public hearing on the spending plan that is set for Wednesday, April 12. The Board could adopt the budget at the public meeting that follows, however it must be approved prior to the end of the current fiscal year that ends on April 30.

As proposed the 2024 budget includes \$3.9 million for personnel expenses up \$276,677 and \$11.54 for operations.

“THERE ARE PLENTY OF PROJECTS HAPPENING IN OTHER DEPARTMENTS, WE ARE DOING WHAT WE CAN TO IMPROVE THE VILLAGE ACROSS ALL DEPARTMENTS.”

MATT FRITZ VILLAGE ADMINISTRATOR

Have you heard the news?



THE REPORTS ARE in... Anastasia is a hit. There is one more weekend to see Coal City Theatre Department's spring production of Anastasia, The Musical taking the stage Friday, March 17 and Saturday, March 18 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, March 19 at 2 p.m. in the Coal City Performing Arts Center. The musical tells the story of a young woman's journey through the past to find her future. The show features Eliana Patten in the title role and a talented cast that includes [seated from left]: Dane Noffsinger, Izzy Kostbade as Countess Lily Malevesky-Malevitch and Logan Hawkins. Standing are Mason Hamilton, Eliana Chernesky, Kat Huston, Elsa Bunton, Adaline Dowling and Kayla Connelly. Reserved seat tickets are available at bit.ly/CCTDTickets or at the door beginning one hour prior to each performance. On-site ticket sales are cash only.

Coal City conveys support for TIF districts

BY ANN GILL EDITOR

Legislation introduced in the Illinois House and Senate propose significant changes to the Tax Increment Financing [TIF] Act, measures opposed by municipalities from across the state.

The village of Coal City is on record in support of maintaining TIF financing, a program that, according to Village Administrator Matt Fritz, allows towns to provide incentives to spur growth that produces jobs, additional tax revenue and increases a community's assessed valuation.

“Coal City's TIF has provided annual capital payment to the Coal City Community Unit School District related to residential properties located within the TIF boundaries on an annual basis since the beginning of the district's incorporation,” Fritz said.

One of the changes presented to the Illinois legislature is outlined in HB 1115.

According to Jacob & Klein and The Economic Development Group, the proposal is “to modify the default formula in the TIF Act as it relates to authorizing municipalities to assist elementary, secondary or unit school districts with addressing increased costs attributable to assisted housing units located within a TIF redevelopment project area that generates new student enrollment.”

HB 1115 was filed in January by Rep. Lance

Yednock, D-Ottawa, and is currently assigned to the Revenue and Finance Committee.

Jacob & Klein and The Economic Development Group serve as the village's TIF consultants since the district was established more than a decade ago.

When a TIF district is established, a base tax rate is set on property within the district. Tax revenue generated above the base rate on those properties is then directed to the TIF fund for capital projects within the district's boundaries like building roads, sewers and water lines.

“This year, TIF is planned to provide large subsidies to decrease the total amount of debt collected from residents for the annual payment required for the sanitary modernization project and the water treatment plant expansion project,” Fritz said, adding that TIF funds will cover the engineering related to a quiet zone.

“This is something we have used to success in Coal City and we have used it pretty well,” Fritz said.

A second piece of legislation directed at TIF was filed last month by Senator Ann Gillespie, D-Arlington Heights.

According to the TIF consultants, SB 1391, “pro-

SEE TIF, PAGE 2

Arrest made in carjacking investigation

STAFF REPORT

A Chicago man was booked into the Will County Adult Detention Facility on Monday, March 13, after an arrest for allegedly carjacking a vehicle days earlier at Division Street and Coal City Road in

Braidwood.

Jamiyah Johnson, 20, was arrested after the Braidwood Police Department obtained an arrest warrant, following the investigation into the incident that took place on Friday, March 10.

According to the police report,

Johnson had traveled from Bloomington north on I-55 before the vehicle he was in stopped near Coal City Road.

According to a witness, Johnson and a female passenger got into an argument

SEE ARREST, PAGE 2



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Parking lot beautification project forthcoming

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

A small portion of a \$1 million grant will be used by the village of Coal City to complete a parking lot project that began with the South Broadway reconstruction. Last week, the Village Board awarded a bid for parking lot improvements to 4 Seasons Landscaping, Inc. at a cost of \$39,850. Village Administrator Matt Fritz said the work will involve removing a portion

of gravel that exists within the parking lot located on the north side of the post office in order to install permeable pavers within the area that will allow grass to grow through the block, but still allow overflow parking to occur on that space when necessary. The village purchased the property and established the space as a public parking area as part of the road reconstruction project. "Due to the cost of the low bidder, 11% of the project will be required to

come from local match in addition to the DCEO funding," Fritz said. The dollars received from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity [DCEO] will be used for multiple projects including storm water improvements in the area of Second Avenue and a phase one engineering study of Reed Road from South Broadway west to Gorman Road. The low bid was \$5,975 less than the second bid received by the village.

Students of the Week



Courtesy photo
COAL CITY INTERMEDIATE School Students of the Week for March 15 are (from left): Emma Hamilton, Harper Lardi, Ayden Swore and Ace Haberzette.

Five Coalers earn honors at GAVC

Five students from Coal City High School have been selected to receive one of the highest honors a student can earn at Grundy Area Vocational Center [GAVC]—the Director's Award. Instructors from each of the center's program areas recognize exceptional students. The honor is based on attendance, leadership skills, citizenship, professional attitude, ability in practicum activities and classroom assignments, teamwork and safety. Coal City students selected for the award in February were Audrey Cooper, agriculture; Angelina Morales, cosmetology; Tabetha Greene, criminal justice; Jadyn Cassani, entrepreneurship and Alaina Gill, health occupations.

Early voting, mail-in voting for April consolidated election

Grundy County Clerk, Kay Olson, would like to remind voters that Early Voting for the upcoming April 4, 2023, Consolidated Election runs through Monday, April 3. Offices to be elected include Municipal District offices, Fire Protection District Trustees, Park District Commissioners, Library District Trustees, Unit School District Board Members, Grade School Board Members, High School Board Members, Community College Trustees, and Regional Board of School Trustees. Early voting takes place at the County Clerk's Office, located in the Grundy County Courthouse, 111 E. Washington St., Morris. Early voting hours are Monday thru Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Additional Early Voting hours: Thursday March 16, 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday, March 18, 8 a.m. to Noon; Tuesday, March 21, 8:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Thursday March 23, 8:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Saturday, March 25, 8 a.m. to Noon; Tuesday, March 28, 8:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Thursday, March 30, 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday, April 1, 8 a.m. to Noon. Please note: Cellphones are not allowed inside the courthouse. Voters wishing to cast a vote by mail ballot in the upcoming Consolidated Election, should contact the County Clerk's Office at 815-941-3222, to obtain the necessary application, or they may find the application under 'Election information' on the Grundy County website at www.grundycountyil.gov. No excuse is needed to vote by mail, and voters are encouraged to apply as early as possible to make sure they receive their ballot in time to vote. Ballots must be post-marked no later than election day and received at the Grundy County Clerk's Office within 14 days after election day. The last day a ballot may be mailed is Thursday, March 30, 2023. Voters with questions or wanting more information should contact the Grundy County Clerk at 815-941-3222, #1, or email elections@grundycountyil.gov.



Courtesy photo
COAL CITY ELEMENTARY School Students of the Week for March 8 in row one are (from left): David Blatzheim, Corrine Gibson, Hunter Sharwarko and Daxton Carey. Completing the group in row two are: Brantley Monshau, Peyton Thompson, Roy Marsh, Owen Koehn, Talon Studer and Mason Hubb.

Students earn honors in annual art contest

The Unit 1 School District held its annual Fine Arts Festival in February. The event is a celebration of the fine arts programs in the district including band, chorus and various levels of art courses offered at each of the five school buildings. Student created artwork was on display at the festival and several students received awards for their work. A piece titled, "It's a Pie!" by Damona Rutherford, an eighth grader at Coal City Middle School, was named Principal's Choice. Additional middle school award winners were Vanna Liebermann, eighth grade, for "Under the Sea"; Kennedy Larson, seventh grade, "Kennedy's Inspirations," and Cash Wetenkamp, sixth grade, for his piece "Spongeball." Award recipients from the intermediate school include: **Fifth grade** Navajo rugs—Best of Show, Aubrey Olszewski; first place, Kenney Loughran and Lila Molloy; second place, Reese Poeschel and Derek Maxwell; third place, Chase Clubb, and fourth place, Gus Cimino. Graffiti Name—Best of Show, Cianna McKee; first, Tristan Brncich, Cody Allen and Jaxon Shats; second, Fiona Lindley, Devon Fatlan and Zack Babcock; third, Caleb Hall and Cali Ness, and fourth, Abby Hitchcock and Cannon Wills. Architectural Block—Best of Show, Katie Bergmark; first, Nalia Caslte, Ty Gigger and Teigan Trofimchuck; second, Liam Bakii, Emalyn Williams and Isabella Hernandez; third place, Keegan Keer and Mel Leman, and fourth place, Kaylie Brodnick and Ben Manering. **Fourth grade** Koi Pond —Best of Show, Lily Connor-Mikos; first place, Olivia Beach; second, Noah Moser; third Jett Johnson and Willow Weathersby, and fourth place, Charles Eden and Anthony Venegas. Gumball Machine—Best of Show, Athena Libner; first place, Grayson Marizza and Madilynn Williams; second, Sienna Ruffatto and Kennedy Murphey; third place, Clare Haberzette and Cody Olson, and fourth place Jake Benson and Grady Jensen. Rothko—Best of Show, Lexi Henderson; first place, Era Bakii; second, Jaycob Wilson and Rosey Matthews; third place, Grayson Bailey and Raye Aldridge, and fourth Amelia Blustein and Carly Chapman. Weaving baskets—Best of Show, Savannah Dick; first place, Lily Harding; second, Addy Hines; third, Lilly Harney, and fourth place, Jase Varju.



Courtesy photo
COAL CITY ELEMENTARY School Students of the Week for March 15 are: Blaine Poeschel, Addilyn Janczak, Kayden Krueger, Noel Rodriquez, Myles Marketti, Lilliana Beach, Faye Thompson, Charles Raddatz, Ariana Eaton and Kira Berlanga.

Kindergarten registration April 26 Wickiser on honor's list at Baylor

Kindergarten registration for the 2023/2024 school year will be held Wednesday, April 26 at the Early Childhood Center. Visit the Coal City School District Early Childhood webpage and click on the kindergarten registration appointment link to make an appointment. This includes the students attending our pre-school program who are going into kindergarten. Call the office for more information. In order to be eligible, a child must be five years of age on or before Sept. 1, 2023. Call 815-634-5042, ext. 1301 for further information or visit the website at www.coalcityschools.org. Registration documents needed at Round-up are a certified birth certificate, driver's license or state ID for notary purposes, proof of residency: Mortgage paper, real estate tax bill, real estate sales agreement or lease agreement and any legal documents such as custody, power of attorney or protection orders. Skyler Wickiser, of Coal City was among more than 5,100 Baylor University students named to the fall 2022 dean's academic honor list, which recognizes Baylor undergraduates for their outstanding academic work during each semester. She is the daughter of Denny and Kristi Wickiser.



Courtesy photo
COAL CITY EARLY Childhood Center Students of the Week for March 15 (from left) are: Danika Steadman, Owen Smith, Grayson Trofimchuck, Aiden Mendez and Greyson Elliott.

Local students named on Mizzou dean's list

Mizzou recognizes the following area students to the fall 2022 dean's list: Anna Schulte, of Braidwood; Joseph Piatak, of Coal City; Harley Felker, Courtney Meyer and Joshua Michalak, all of Diamond; Mazie Meyr, of Essex and Rhianna Brown, Raelene DesRochers, Rebecca Horton and Emily Watson, all of Wilmington.

Smith earns dean's list honors

Zachary Smith, of Coal City, was named to the University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Applied Health Sciences dean's list for a seventh consecutive semester. Smith, a senior at UIC, is enrolled in the Department of Kinesiology and Nutrition studying kinesiology.

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Early Voting will begin on Friday, March 10th and continue through Monday, April 3, 2023.
LOCATION - Grundy County Courthouse (Lobby)
Grundy County Election Authority
111 East Washington Street, Room 12
Morris, IL 60450
TIME - Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (unless noted below)

Saturday	March 11th	8:00 a.m. to Noon
Tuesday	March 14th	8:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Thursday	March 16th	8:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Saturday	March 18th	8:00 a.m. to Noon
Tuesday	March 21st	8:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Thursday	March 23rd	8:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Saturday	March 25th	8:00 a.m. to Noon
Tuesday	March 28th	8:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Thursday	March 30th	8:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Saturday	April 1st	8:00 a.m. to Noon
Sunday	April 2nd	8:00 a.m. to Noon

Please call the Grundy County Clerk's Office at (815) 941-3222, Option #1 if you have any questions.
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Mobile food pantry to visit Kuzma Cottage

Catholic Charities of Joliet will be hosting Mobile Food Pantry at Kuzma Care Cottage on Monday, March 20, at 635 S. Main St., Wilmington from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. When you arrive, please line up in the St. Rose Church parking lot by entering on the Main Street side. (Please do not arrive before 9 a.m.) All Mobile Food Pantries will use a "drive thru" method to dis-

tribute food. Please clear space in your trunk or backseat so volunteers can load boxes of food directly into your vehicle. Food is free to neighbors in need; no ID, proof of address or income is required. Everyone is welcome. Food is distributed on a first-come, first served basis, while supplies last.

Wheeler Ave. bridge over I-80 closing

The Illinois Department of Transportation announced that a project to replace the bridge carrying Wheeler Avenue over Interstate 80, in Joliet, will require a full closure of Wheeler Avenue, between Woods and Park avenues beginning March 20 through early November. The project is part of advance work leading to the \$1.2 billion reconstruction of I-80 through Will County. A posted detour will direct motorists to Meadow Avenue, Larkin Avenue (Illinois 7) and Jefferson Street (U.S. 52). Motorists should also expect occasional overnight lane closures on I-80 at the bridge during that time. The \$5.7 million project will replace the existing bridge with a new structure that will accommodate the widening of I-80 under the bridge, new

storm sewers and ADA-compliant sidewalk ramps will also be installed. The project is anticipated to be completed in December. The overall I-80 project will redesign and rebuild 16 miles from Ridge Road, in Minooka, to U.S. 30, in Joliet and New Lenox, while adding or extending auxiliary lanes to improve safety and reduce congestion. Interchanges will be rebuilt or improved at Interstate 55, Illinois 7, Center Street, Chicago Street, Richards Street and Briggs Street, with a new flyover ramp linking southbound I-55 to eastbound I-80 to improve traffic flow and safety. More than 30 bridges will be rehabilitated or replaced, including those over the Des Plaines River.

The cocktail that made tequila popular

I am a big fan of classic rock, and the social media advertising algorithm knows this very well. I regularly receive updates in my news feed when my favorite bands release new music, or go on tour. I was happy to see the Eagles Hotel California tour is still going strong into 2023. If you are a fan of the iconic Hotel California album, you're in luck as the band performs the album in its entirety at every show as part of this tour. How "iconic" is Hotel California? Well, the December 1976 release is one of the best-selling albums of all time with certified sales of over 26 million copies in the US and over 32 million copies worldwide. In addition to performing the Hotel California album from start to finish the band will also play a "greatest hits" set on this tour. The band has been touring and recording in various forms off and on for over 50 years, let's toast the country/rock pioneers with the classic Tequila Sunrise. I had always assumed that the Tequila Sunrise cocktail was named after Tequila Sunrise the song. Though the cocktail and song were popular in the early 1970s, it is actually the song that is named after the cocktail. The late Glenn Frey and Don Henley wrote the song together, and Glenn Frey almost nixed the title because he felt that the drink was too popular and the title would be too cliché. Henley insisted that they keep the title and told Frey to look at it from the point

of view of someone watching the sunrise after drinking tequila all night. The title stuck and the song became one of the band's signature songs. It is safe to assume that the Henley and Frey were fans of the Tequila Sunrise as California was ground zero for the Tequila Sunrise craze of the early 1970s. The drink originated in northern California at the Trident, a bar in Sausalito. Young bartenders Bobby Lozoff and Billy Rice created the cocktail in late 1971 or early 1972 while working at the Trident. One evening in 1972, legendary Bay Area promoter Bill Graham rented the Trident for a private party to kick off the Rolling Stones North American tour. Mick Jagger fell in love with the Tequila Sunrise at the party and spent the entire tour drinking Tequila Sunrise cocktails with his entourage. In 2023, we take our selection of quality tequila for granted. In 1972 tequila was difficult to find on US store shelves, and when you did find it Jose Cuervo was more than likely your only option. Large scale imports of premium 100% agave tequila was still years away in 1972. The Tequila Sunrise is responsible for giving tequila the boost that it needed, and

the folks at Jose Cuervo seized the moment and began to print the recipe for the Tequila Sunrise on every bottle of their tequila shipped to the US. The song was so popular in the spring of 1973 that everyone wanted to make their very own Tequila Sunrise. The recipe was simple, the ingredients were easy to obtain, and anyone with ice and a glass could make one. Start with a tall, ice-filled glass. Pour in tequila, top with orange juice, slowly pour in grenadine. Wait a few seconds for the grenadine to settle to the bottom, and do not stir the drink. The red grenadine at the bottom will remain separated from the drink creating a "sunrise" effect in the glass. If you stir the drink it will become a reddish-orange drink that will taste great, but will not have the trademark sunrise. The drink was likely made with Jose Cuervo Gold tequila in the early days, but higher quality 100% agave tequilas are your best bet both for presentation and taste. Start with a blanco (white) or plata (silver) tequila. The blanco tequilas tend to be drier and leave very little aftertaste and are better suited for mixing. A good 100% agave blanco or plata tequila will set you back about \$20 depending on state and local taxes. Pour your tequila over ice and top with a quality orange

juice, most commercial bars use Minute Maid juice for mixing. The ratio of orange juice to tequila is 2 to 1, so you will want to use a quality orange juice. The best grenadine for a tequila sunrise is the brightest, reddest grenadine that you can get your hands on. Even though Rose's Grenadine is more of a red dyed cherry syrup, it works remarkably well in a Tequila Sunrise due to the bright red color. Monin makes a wonderful grenadine, Sonoma Syrup Company turns out quality grenadine as well. However, these newer craft cocktail grenadines are made from real pomegranate which makes them a bit dull in color. Rose's was the only grenadine available in most markets back in 1972, so it is safe to assume that the Tequila Sunrise was created using Rose's. Pour yourself a Tequila Sunrise and spin (or stream) your favorite Eagles album, be sure to catch the show when it comes to your town. The Tequila Sunrise is built and served in a Collins (tall) glass. Fill a tall glass with ice, then add: 1.5 oz. tequila 3 oz orange juice Slowly pour 1/2 oz. grenadine into the middle of the glass, allow grenadine to sink to the bottom to form the "sunrise" effect. Until next week, enjoy responsibly.



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Chicago fastest growing city in U.S. for auto thefts

BY GLENN MINNIS
THE CENTER SQUARE
The city of Chicago easily outpaced the rest of the country as the fastest growing city for auto thefts in 2022 with larcenies rising by 55%. With such acts of vandalism on the rise across the country as part of an ongoing pandemic-fueled outbreak, a new National Insurance Crime Bureau (NCIB) annual study found Illinois had the largest percentage increase among larger states at 35%. "Over one million vehicles were stolen nationwide in 2022," NCIB president and CEO David Glawe told The Center Square. "States that saw the largest increase in vehicle thefts were Illinois, Washington and New York. There is little deterrence with vehicle thefts treated as property crimes. Organized gangs and juveniles steal vehicles and use them to facilitate other crimes. To stop this lawless behavior, we must re-invest in our law enforcement partners, support community engagement and policing programs and implement successful early interven-

tion programs for at-risk youth." Just last week the Braidwood Police reported a carjacking at a gas station at Illinois 113 and I-55. The suspect drove off on northbound I-55 with police in pursuit. They backed off to later find stolen vehicle driven to southeast Chicago. The suspect ran off, leaving the vehicle behind where it was recovered and brought back to Braidwood. Across the country, thefts were up 7%, pushing the number of stolen vehicles over 1 million for the first time in more than 15 years. Overall, including carjackings, Chicago had 21,516 reported auto thefts over the year, up by nearly 8,000 from 13,856 the previous year. As part of its campaign to stem the tide, the Chicago Police Department over the past several months has instituted an expanded vehicular hijacking task force. Through February, there were 232 reported carjackings across the city this year, a 23% decline over the same period in 2022. At the same time, overall motor vehicle thefts are sharply up over the first two-plus months of this year, with 5,375 reports of stolen vehicles through March 5, a 138% increase, according to Chicago

Police Department crime statistics. "Vehicle crime is certainly still a major issue across the nation and while there are many reasons for this, NCIB data does not point to one specific reason," staffers at the Des Plaines-based organization added. "We know that criminals steal vehicles to commit other crimes, sometimes vehicles end up in chop shops, get shipped overseas, or cross the border into Mexico." Glawe added at least part of the epidemic can be traced to supply chain issues that have made used cars more valuable and the job of upkeep for them more costly. Over the last 36 months alone, catalytic converter thefts have jumped by 1,200% and a recent study by online auto search site iSeeCars details that in Illinois, the average price of a used car now tops \$35,000. In January, the CPD began hosting vehicle safety events where they passed out steering wheel locks for Kia and Hyundai vehicles as part of a plan aimed at making it easier to identify catalytic converters, which makes them harder to resell.

Illinois bill would require personal finance class

Illinois bill would require personal finance class

BY GLENN MINNIS
THE CENTER SQUARE
State Senator Kimberly Lightford is pushing a bill that would require all high school students to take a semester-long personal finance course before graduating. Senate Bill 1266 strives to make sure students learn about managing money before earning a high school diploma, with the course covering everything from banking, to bill payment, to investing, to managing credit and paying for college. The bill would affect the freshman class of the 2024 to 2025 school year, with those students required to take the course as a junior or senior before receiving their diploma. The proposed bill comes on the heels of a new Wirepoints report that outlines how Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) data shows not a single student at no less than 53 schools across the state can do math at grade level. The numbers are nearly just as bleak in reading, where the report looked at 30 schools with at least 22 of them being part of the Chicago Public Schools sys-

tem. Overall, researchers found that only 1 out of 10 kids or fewer can do math at grade level in 930 schools. Wirepoints President Ted Dabrowski, who co-authored the website's schools report, isn't sure how much difference Lightford's proposal will make, even if it becomes law. "Every kid should learn about finances and how to manage their financial future, but the first priority for Illinois leaders should be to assure that kids can read and do math and today that's not happening," he told The Center Square. "Instead of adding another mandate for this they should mandate that schools massively elevate the percentage of kids who can read and do math in Illinois schools." Despite Wirepoints' findings, many of the schools where some students are struggling the most were rated "commendable" by ISBE. SB 1266 is now awaiting a hearing in the Senate Education Committee.

Turn lights off March 25

Rummage sale in Braceville

Earth Hour is planned for Saturday, March 25 from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. This one-hour event is designed to increase awareness of energy use. To participate, all you need to do is turn off your lights from 8:30 to 9:30 pm on March 25. This event is celebrated around the world with many iconic buildings turning off lights. It also serves to make the night sky easier to view, with its many stars. Some birds use the stars to navigate and "light pollution" has proven to interfere with their migration patterns. If you use outside lighting, be sure it focuses on pavements and not up to the sky. All of us can use lights that are highly efficient and less disturbing to our natural world.

2023 fishing licenses on sale now

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is reminding hunters and anglers that fishing, hunting and combination licenses for the 2023 season are on sale both online and bait and tackle stores. These licenses are good until March 31, 2024.

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Photo by Eric Fisher

SIGNATURE RETINA CONSULTANTS has open in the former U.S. Bank building in Braidwood. Dr. Sumit Bhatia and staff members Nichole Olson (left) and Cherie Watts (right) have been busy setting up the new medical offices. They stand in the reception area after entering the building.

Signature Retina Consultants opens in Braidwood

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

A world-class retina specialist is feeling right at home with a recent move to Braidwood.

Dr. Sumit Bhatia opened new offices on Main Street in the former U.S. Bank building. In three short months and still a work in progress, the feeling of moving to a small town with regional appeal has settled in.

"We love the small town feel. It just feels so cozy and everybody has been kind and knows each other," Bhatia said.

Like the other day when a delivery for his office went to a wrong address. "The guy who got it actually came by and dropped it off for us. You don't get that kind of hospitality in every town."

Bhatia is a board-certified ophthalmologist and retina surgeon who has been in private practice since 2007 and comes with a wealth of experience having done over 33,000 in-office and operating room based surgical procedures.

He's is a native of Illinois having grown up in Peoria. He received his undergraduate education from the University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign. He earned his Doctor of Medicine from the University of Chicago in 2001. Following a one year internship at MacNeal Hospital in Berwyn, IL, he completed his ophthalmology residency at the University of Chicago in 2005. He then obtained his Retina Medical and Surgical fellowship at the esteemed Boston University Medical Center in Boston, MA.

Dr. Bhatia has 15 years of experience in the treatment of surgical and medical diseases such as age related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, retinal vein occlusion, retinal tears and detachments, vitreous hemorrhages, epiretinal membrane and macular holes.

He helped patients in Bloomington, Peoria, Decatur, Danville, Springfield, Peru, Champaign and Galesburg before opening his own practice here.

He lives in Bloomington with his wife and two children so his commute is a little more than one hour.

"I drove up here, drove around and found a couple of properties that were available. I worked with a realtor who mentioned a bank branch that had been closed and was immediately available. After looking over the town and surrounding communities I felt it could work."

The first month was spent renovating the building. The indestructible bank vault and bullet-proof drive-up window are still there, but the rest of building has been converted into a spacious waiting room, reception area, four patient rooms with state-of-the-art laser and optical equipment, break room and new restrooms.

"It was a long month, we were always here while this place was being worked on. We were going to Casey's like two times a day. So we've got to know all the staff. We've gotten to know the people at Rosati's Pizza, eating there sometimes two, three times a week," joked Bhatia. "But you know that small town feel just really welcomes you and lets you know that everybody is really happy to have you in town."

As a retina specialist his patients are mostly by referral. He does not perform cataract surgery, nor general eye exams or dispense glasses, instead specializing on treating eye diseases.

"I wanted to focus on, at that time, diseases where

there were no great cures. I wanted to be at the forefront of diseases you could barely treat or not treat at all. So now, in the 15 years I've been in practice, we have treatments for wet macular degeneration and we can help people initially improve their vision and then maintain it for years. Normally with that disease you'd lose your vision in about four months.

"So it's nice to be able to say to people 'we can do something for you, prolong your vision' when in their parents' generation that wasn't an option," Dr. Bhatia said.

He noted that just in the last few weeks a new drug has become available that can prolong vision for dry macular degeneration. Before, there was little more than vitamins to offer.

"There have been some amazing advances for retina diseases. On one hand there are diseases which you don't have necessarily the ability to regain perfect eyesight. But we can help people maintain and even improve it somewhat. You can keep it going much longer than the natural disease."

Bhatia said it's rewarding knowing he can do more for his patients today than he could 15 years ago.

"That's what gets me up in the morning and keeps me wanting to come to work every day. It's being able to do more for my patients. Like getting this office open for patients. It's got a special place in my heart to get my own building.

But what really brings me in day after day and has been for 15 years is seeing the patients and being able to talk with them and being able to encourage them that we will keep this vision going for as long as we can. That's what I hope to be doing here for the next 20-25 years."

As for hobbies Dr. Bhatia says other than family he has none. He loves family time, eating together, watching movies or being outdoors. But now that he's practicing on his own there are new demands.

"It definitely has brought on new challenges the last six months and I'd say they're starting to ease a bit. But you learn a lot about how to run a business and you appreciate all the other small businesses that are around in town, especially what it takes to keep them going. I see a lot of hard working people in these small towns and I've come to appreciate them more now that I am a business owner too," he commented.

Ideally he'll draw patients from a 60-mile radius.

"There are not a lot of retina specialists outside of Chicago in this part of Illinois or even down in Central Southern Illinois. The people I treat are usually a little bit older who need to sustain the vision they have. They may feel more comfortable coming to a small town than going to Chicago. We've got the latest medicines and equipment being used anywhere in the U.S. and we're able to treat them right here."

It's what area residents can now call world-class eye care close to home.



DR. SUMIT BHATIA, a retina surgeon, uses state-of-the-art optical quipment and medicines to examine and treat patients. Here he tests the eyes of his receptionist Nichole Olson.



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morrishospital.org/orthopedics



Photos by Marney Simon

BATHING SUITS, SWIM trunks and even some Hawaiian skirts might look normal on the beach at the Braidwood Rec Club in July, but it was not your typical refreshing dunk in the water on Saturday, March 11. Hundreds of participants including law enforcement and fire department officials from Braidwood, Wilmington, Will County, and the Illinois State Police, as well as residents and fun seekers, took the plunge for the 2023 Law Enforcement Torch Run Polar Plunge to support Special Olympics Illinois athletes. The polar plunge, which takes place at multiple sites across the nation, raises funds for Special Olympics. The Illinois Law Enforcement Torch Run is the statewide presenting sponsor for the 2023 Polar Plunge. The Law Enforcement Torch Run has raised more than \$61 million since 1986 while increasing awareness of Special Olympics Illinois athletes and their accomplishments.



DIVERS FROM THE Braidwood Fire Protection District coax some polar plungers into the water at Braidwood Rec Club. The divers were on hand to ensure a safe event.

Named on fall dean's list

Mizzou recognizes the following area students to the fall 2022 dean's list:

Anna Schulte, of Braidwood; Joseph Piatak, of Coal City; Harley Felker, Courtney Meyer and Joshua

Michalak, all of Diamond; Mazie Meyr, of Essex and Rhianna Brown, Raelene DesRochers, Rebecca Horton and Emily Watson, all of Wilmington.

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April 1

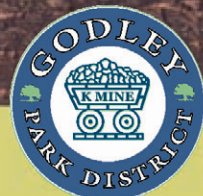
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\$6: AGES 2-12
\$10: AGES 13 - ADULT

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Gas prices rise despite drop in price for oil

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have risen 12.2 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.62/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Prices in Illinois are 11.4 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 95.2 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

"With the transition to more expensive summer gasoline underway coast to coast, wholesale gasoline prices continue to inch up at a rate typical for this time of year, reflected in the national average rising for the second straight week," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Illinois was priced at \$3.13/g while the most expensive was \$4.69/g.

Locally gas prices varied from \$3.33/g at Mohsen on Lorenzo Rd., Wilmington, \$3.41/g in Braidwood, \$3.46/g in Wilmington and \$3.59/g in Coal City.

The national average price of gasoline has risen 8.0 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.44/g.

"While oil prices edged slightly lower on weaker outlooks for economic growth, continued refinery maintenance and the higher cost of seasonal blends of fuel are offsetting oil's decline. The price of diesel, however, continues to slowly decline as we see consumption for diesel lighten. The best news for both gasoline and diesel prices is how significant a drop we've seen from year-ago levels, with more disinflation to come in the weeks ahead, even as gas prices are likely to inch up."



AUDREA HUSTON

Local author book signing

Local author Andrea Huston, of Diamond, will be at Lori Bonarek Realty, 640 S. Broadway in Coal City on Thursday, March 16, 6-7:30 p.m. Sway is the first book written by Huston who writes under the pen name Kathleen Lacie. Join us on Thursday, March 16, 6-7:30 p.m. Limited books will be available for sale, or bring your own book to be signed.

"We are so excited to support a local author" stated Bonarek. For more information call 815-518-2300.

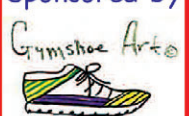
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Illinois must get smarter with mental health

Gov. JB Pritzker declared last week when announcing the formation of the Behavioral Health Workforce Education Center that the state was building "the best behavioral health system in the nation."

It was quite a bold thing to say. So, my associate Isabel Miller and I asked a couple of follow-up questions: How long will this take and how much will it cost?

The response from a spokesperson was kinda underwhelming: "Under Governor Pritzker's leadership, the state has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to rebuild our behavioral health infrastructure and the Governor is committed to continuing these critical investments year after year to build the best system in the nation. Illinois has climbed in the national rankings by putting our people first and we're on the right path if we continue to make generational change. With our statewide partnerships and continued investment Illinois will soon serve as the national standard for a behavioral health system that prioritizes workers and provides the best possible care for those who need it."

That obviously didn't answer either of our questions. And no Brownie Points for brevity, either. Sorry to make you read it.

Also, the background information the governor's office sent about the administration's progress didn't quite

match up with the governor's flowery rhetoric.

Recent national rankings issued by Mental Health America, a group founded more than a century ago, show Illinois has moved from an 11th-place overall mental health back in 2018 to 9th place this year. An overall ranking of 1-13, according to the organization, "indicates lower prevalence of mental illness and higher rates of access to care."

However, the state's ranking for adults actually slipped during that time period from 8th to 9th, and the ranking for youth remained at 13th. This despite spending hundreds of millions of additional dollars since the start of 2019 on mental health initiatives.

Even so, a key stakeholder heaped praise on the governor's plan to use the new Behavioral Health Workforce Education Center to lead the revamp of the long-troubled Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center in deep southern Illinois.

Equip for Equality issued an investigative report back in 2005 which documented numerous horrors at Choate. The group called for the facility's closure at the time. "Nearly two decades later," the group claimed last week via press release, "enhanced monitoring



CAPITOL FACTS
Rich Miller

activities show little has changed."

The group claims that Choate residents continue to be "segregated" from their community "without receiving the necessary services to actually address why they ended up there."

Residents, the group said, continue to be "afraid of staff and peers, and afraid of retaliation if they report staff abuse."

"Many of the recent news stories are about incidents that happened a year or more ago," said Stacey Aschemann, Equip for Equality's vice president in charge of monitoring the conditions at Choate. "Based on our recent monitoring, we can say without a doubt that these continue to be ongoing issues."

So, why has it taken so long for the state to act? The governor told reporters that the state simply hadn't had the financial resources to do enough about the problem.

The new Behavioral Health Workforce Education Center has been in the works for five years and will hopefully help the state increase the workforce size enough to deal with the issues, not only at Choate, but throughout the state. With more tax revenues coming in, the state can start getting a handle on things.

And, make no mistake, the

problems are severe, despite what national rankings may show. Currently, 15,000 people are on a waiting list for community-based intellectual and developmental disabilities placement, according to a report last week by Capitol News Illinois, Lee Enterprises and ProPublica Illinois. Those outlets' reporting on Choate, by the way, sparked the recent intense interest in the facility's many problems and helped push the administration into action, a fact which Pritzker himself has acknowledged.

There are, of course, parochial concerns about any changes at Choate. Sen. Terri Bryant (R-Murphysboro), who represents the area, claimed the central problem is with facility management (a good point) and said she opposed moving residents out of the facility (not so good). AFSCME, of course, is worried about the future of its members at Choate.

The bottom line is that the state just has to get smarter. These problems have existed for decades and decades, but the folks at Choate and thousands of others across this state deserve care and help, not physical abuse and neglect. The people in charge need to be better than this, so this attempt to bring new workers into the system and keep them there cannot fail.

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

Bill to end moratorium on building nuclear plants in Illinois advances

SPRINGFIELD — State Senator Sue Rezin has advanced legislation putting Illinois one step closer to finally lifting its moratorium on building new nuclear reactors. "For over 35 years, our state has had an archaic and arbitrary ban on the construction of new nuclear power plants," said Senator Rezin. "This moratorium has remained in place despite the fact that Illinois has efficiently and safely received carbon-free energy from our state's six nuclear stations for roughly four decades."

Senate Bill 76 would delete the language that provides that no construction shall commence on any new nuclear power plant to be located within the state. Under Rezin's legislation, public utility and energy companies would be given the option to choose whether they want to invest in the construction of both traditional, large nuclear reactors or new, small modular reactors (SMRs) that could be placed in existing infrastructure such as factories or

pre-existing coal-fired power plants that are already connected to the electric grid.

"New nuclear power plants, whether SMRs or the traditional, offer our state the ability to increase its energy capacity and potentially lower future energy cost with carbon-free, reliable, and resilient nuclear power," continued Rezin. "They would also have the potential to help local economies of traditional coal communities that are currently or will be struggling from the loss of their decommissioned coal-fired power plants."

Senate Bill 76 advanced out of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee on March 8, and now awaits a vote by the full Senate chamber.

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State police see alarming trend in road rage shootings

The Illinois State Police (ISP) is warning the public about what appears to be an increasing trend in road rage.

While the number of shootings on Chicago area expressways continues to decrease compared to the height in 2021, victims are increasingly reporting road rage as the reason behind the expressway shooting.

In 2022, road rage was reported in approximately 40% of Chicago area expressway shootings handled by ISP. This is up from 12% in 2021. Already in 2023, road rage has been reported in at least nine Chicago area expressway shootings. This is in addition to other types of road rage-associated violence such as crashes and physical fights.

Watch for the following signs of road rage, aggressive driving:

- Following too closely or tailgating
- Improper or erratic lane changing

- Illegally driving on the shoulder of the road (emergency lane), in a ditch/median, or on sidewalk
- Passing where prohibited
- Operating the vehicle in an erratic, reckless, careless, or negligent manner or suddenly changing speeds
- Failure to yield right of way
- Failure to obey traffic laws, signs, and devices
- Failure to yield to emergency personnel and construction zone speed limits

- Failure to signal
- Driving too fast for conditions or in excess of posted speed limit
- Racing
- Making an improper turn

According to a AAA Foundation study, when drivers explained why they became violent, the reasons were often trivial such as the other driver wouldn't let

them pass or they kept tailgating.

If you are in the left lane and someone wants to pass, move to your right and allow them to pass.

When merging, make sure you have plenty of room and use your turn signal.

If someone cuts you off, slow down and give them room to merge into your lane.

If a speeding driver is tailgating you, safely change lanes when able.

Making gestures might anger the other driver; create distance and avoid confrontation.

If another driver is acting angry, don't make eye contact. Call the police if you believe a driver is following you or harassing you. Call 911 and/or go to the nearest police department to report it.

Soup Supper, talent show

A soup supper and talent show will be held at Braceville United Methodist Church, 106 W. Gould St., Braceville on Saturday, March 18. Supper will be from 4-6 p.m. with talent show starting at 6 p.m. Admission is donation.

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Rain barrel, compost bins to be available in Wilmington

Will County is teaming up with The Conservation Foundation to offer compost bins and rain barrels this Spring.

Order them on-line by April 30 and pick them up in Wilmington on Saturday, May 13.

A rain barrel will capture 70-90% of a typical rain fall, allowing some overflow to cascade across your lawn to

storm drains in the street or swales in some subdivisions.

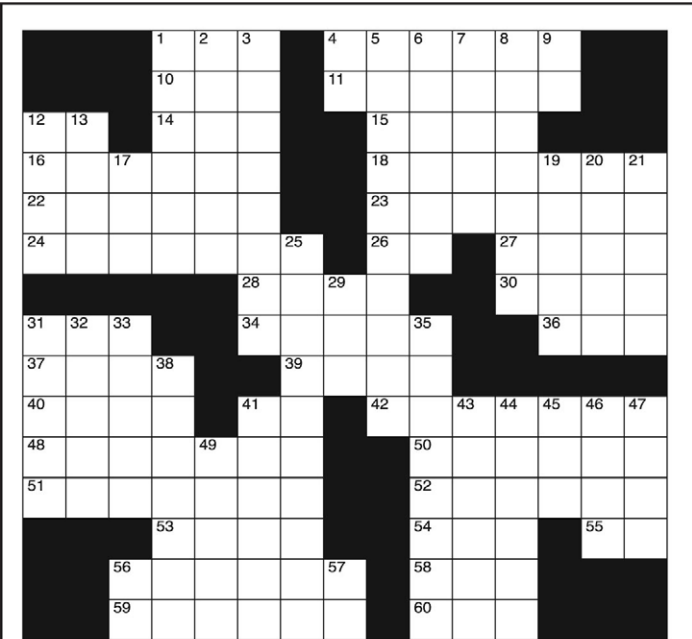
You may use the water you captured for watering your garden, plants, trees, and bushes between rain events. This saves you money and reduces pressure on our drinking water sources.

To place an order go to the event calendar at willcounty-green.com

Take a Marvelous hike

The Forest Preserve will be hosting a Marvelous March Hike Friday, March 24, from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

Explore ephemeral ponds, emerging buds and other ecological wonders on a 1.5-mile hike with a naturalist. Free, all ages. Register by March 23.



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Belonging to a thing
- 4. Pass or go by
- 10. Partner to cheese
- 11. Subjects
- 12. U.S. State (abbr.)
- 14. Bits per inch
- 15. Forest-dwelling deer
- 16. Illinois city
- 18. A salt or ester of acetic acid
- 22. Wholly unharmed
- 23. Cuddled
- 24. Bane
- 26. Global investment bank (abbr.)
- 27. Oh my gosh!
- 28. Arrive
- 30. Famed Spanish artist
- 31. Home of "Frontline"
- 34. Group of quill feathers
- 36. Keyboard key
- 37. Army training group
- 39. Detail
- 40. Pole with flat blade
- 41. Football play
- 42. Makes unhappy
- 48. Island in Hawaii
- 50. Back in business
- 51. Of an individual
- 52. Painful chest condition
- 53. Tropical American monkey
- 54. Matchstick game
- 55. For instance
- 56. Even again
- 58. Popular beverage
- 59. Evaluate
- 60. Time units (abbr.)

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Stain one's hands
- 2. Nocturnal hoofed animals
- 3. Back condition
- 4. Popular movie alien
- 5. City of Angels
- 6. Peaks
- 7. Infantry weapons
- 8. Left
- 9. Atomic #99
- 12. Told a good yarn
- 13. Vale
- 17. Resistance unit
- 19. Aquatic plant
- 20. Bluish greens
- 21. About some Norse poems
- 25. Reinforces
- 29. Egyptian mythological goddess
- 31. Supportive material
- 32. Subatomic particle
- 33. Expired bread
- 35. Cereal grain
- 38. Goes against
- 41. Walkie
- 43. One who does not accept
- 44. Beliefs
- 45. Indicates near
- 46. Brazilian NBA star
- 47. Grab quickly
- 49. Romantic poet
- 56. College dorm worker
- 57. Set of data

How upgrading your phone can effect the planet

Dear EarthTalk: Is it really bad for the planet to upgrade my phone every two years?
—A.J., Darien, CT

Smartphones have certainly become ubiquitous, with some 85 percent of Americans and 67 percent of adults worldwide possessing one. Manufacturers sell almost 1.5 billion of them per year.

And every year these manufacturers come out with upgraded models to lure customers into trading in their old models to get the latest technology at their fingertips. According to the Consumer Electronic Association the average lifespan of a smartphone is 4.7 years, but the average American user replaces their smartphone within three years.

This can be, in part, attributed to planned obsolescence by manufacturers. As new smartphones are manufactured, new software updates accompany them; these updates can lead to older phones becoming unusable if they do not have the capacity to accommodate the new software.

Regarding pollution created by the industry, 95 percent of emissions come from the production phase. A culture that requires constant replacements results in ongoing growth of manufacturing emissions.

In addition, continuously replacing phones creates e-waste in the form of the phones themselves. In 2019, 50 million tons of waste came from smartphones which constitute about 10 percent of e-waste globally.

One way to combat e-waste is to recycle. However, according to the World



Economic Forum, only about 20 percent of global e-waste is recycled. The Basel Action Network used radio tracking to verify where shipments of e-waste were sent.

They found that nearly 40 percent of e-waste from the United States was exported illegally to developing nations where it was unsafely processed or even burned in the open air.

There are steps manufacturers can take to alleviate the environmental burden, one being to introduce "repairable" phones. Currently manufacturers hamper smartphone repair with very high repair prices and restricting third parties from having access to the needed parts.

Europe is leading the charge on embracing a circular economy surrounding smartphones that encourages repairs, refurbishments and upgrades instead of replacement.

Various European countries have instituted programs to address the problem. France maintains a publicly accessible phone reparability index to help consumers there make smart choices about their smartphone purchases.

Meanwhile, Sweden and Austria both offer financial incentives for device repairs to encourage fixing instead of junking old smartphones and



KEEPING A smartphone for more than two years could yield dividends for the environment.

other electronics.

Whether or not such programs exist in your neck of the woods, you can be part of the solution by simply waiting longer to upgrade your phone, which will help reduce the demand on production while lowering your environmental footprint.

While it may not seem like much at first glance, keeping your phone for an extra year can reduce your lifetime

device usage by 25 percent. When it is finally time to get a new phone, an eco-conscious consumer can turn to companies like Fairphone and SHIFT that offer easily changeable parts and support software upgrades throughout the phone's lifespan.

EarthTalk® is a 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. Send questions to: question@earth-talk.org.

Red Carpet Corridor Festival Craft show and flea market

Wilmington, IL • Saturday, May 6

Become a vendor in the craft show and flea market planned for Saturday, May 6, in downtown Wilmington during the Red Carpet Corridor festivities, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

A non-refundable permit fee for a 10x10 space is \$35 on or before April 22; \$50 postmarked April 24-29. Do not mail after April 29. For vendors who make payment the day of show the fee will be \$65 (first come, first served). Must arrive by 8 a.m. to set-up. Even non-profit organizations must pay for a spot.

For fresh food vendors (for all who prepare food on site): \$100 fee for a 10x20 space and contract must be postmarked by April 29; \$130 fee if space is paid for after April 29.

Set-up can begin as early as 6:30 a.m. Arrive by 8 a.m. and remove all vehicles by 8:40 a.m. Check in will be at the north end of Water St. Unfortunately, no electricity will be available.

Complete the contract below and return it with a check made payable to "Women of Wilmington" to: Women of Wilmington, c/o Brenda Craig-Cherveney, 1235 Chesson Court, Wilmington, IL 60481.

Questions can be directed to Cherveney by emailing brenniej@aol.com.

The Red Carpet Event Committee and Women of Wilmington will not assume liability for any losses, damages or injuries sustained by exhibitors or spectators.

Craft Show and Flea Market Application

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Contact Person: _____

Signature: _____

E-mail Address: _____

List of what will be sold: _____

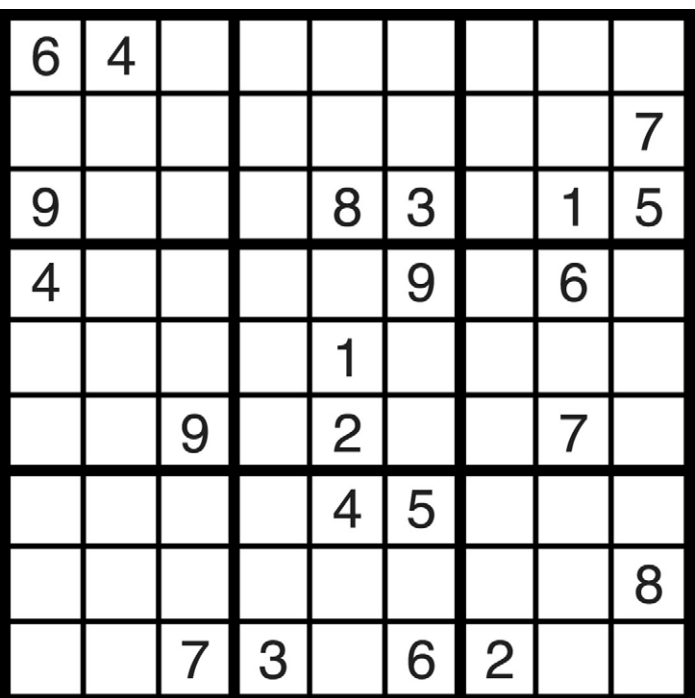
How many spaces? (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Fix that leak and save water

Stop water leaks from damaging your home or running up your bills. Homeowners can save up to 10% on their water bills by correcting common and easy-to-fix water issues like leaking valves and worn toilet flap-

pers, according to the U.S.EPA.

Water usage greater than 12,000 gallons (16 CCF) a month for a family of four in the winter is a sign of serious leaks! Check your monthly water bill for your usage.



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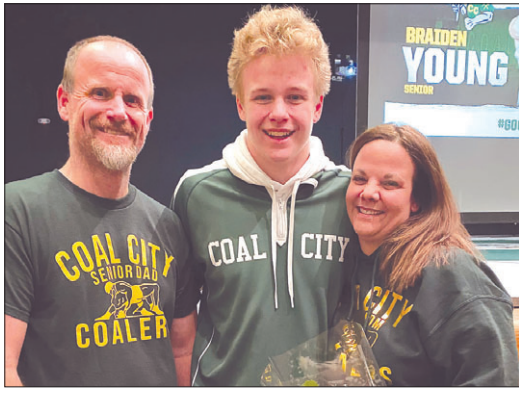
THE BRAIDWOOD
JOURNAL

COALER SPORTS

State Champions, parents honored on Senior Night



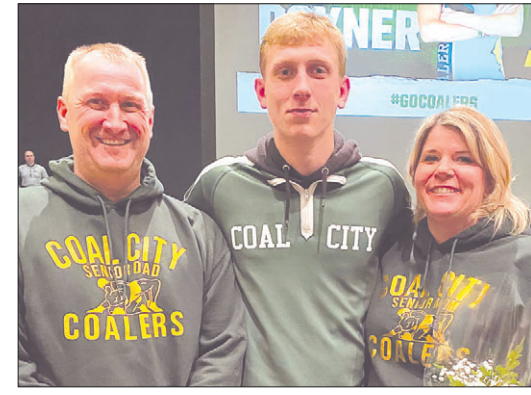
COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Joey Breneman is escorted by his parents Jill and Mike Breneman. He was a four-year starter and finished third at state. Joey had to overcome more adversity than anyone on the team. He is as resilient as they come. He has participated in football for 4 years and his future plans are join Local 150 Operating Engineers.



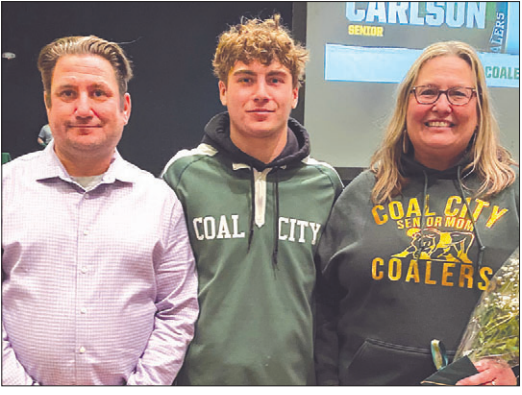
COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Braiden Young is escorted by his parents Brooke and Kevin Young. Braiden, a four-year wrestler, finished fourth at state. He is a 2-year starter and a captain on the team. He has participated in football and baseball for four years. His future plans are to attend a four year university.



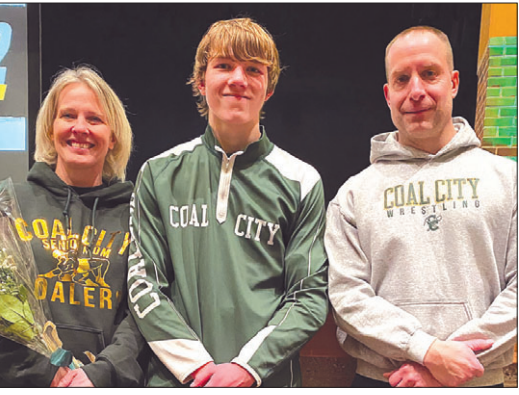
COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Mateo Blessing is escorted by Josh Wilson, Danille Wilson and Tony Blessing. He is a 4 year varsity starter and a 2-time team captain. He also played soccer and football at CCHS and future plans are to study business and wrestle.



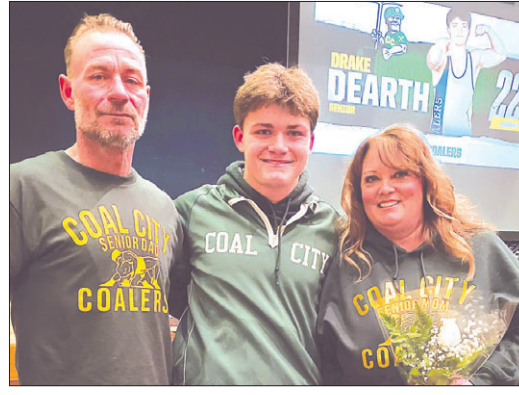
COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Jack Poyner is escorted by his parents Gretchen and Clinton Poyner. Jack has done 4 years in the program. He is a two-year varsity starter for the Coalers. Jack has also participated in football for four years and one year of golf.



COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Derek Carlson is escorted by his parents Tracy and Chris Carlson. Derek is a returning state qualifier. He is a three-year starter and a two time captain. He has also been involved in football, baseball and Theatre while attending CCHS. His future plans are to attend a four year university.



COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Jake Piatak is escorted by parents Vince and Gina Piatak. Jake is a returning state qualifier in 2021. He is a two-year varsity starter. Future plans are to attend college and major in electrical engineering.



COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Drake Dearth is escorted by his parents Kelly and Jason Dearth on Senior Night. Drake is a four-year wrestler and state qualifier. He participated in football for four years and his future plans are to be a railroad engineer for BNSF Railway.



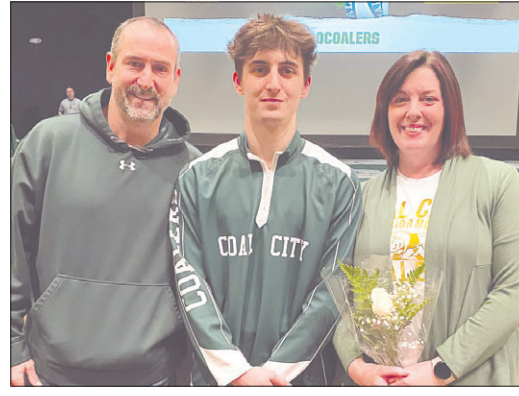
COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Tyler Porth is escorted by his parents Stephanie and Mike Porth during Senior Night. Tyler has done four years in the program. He has participated in football for four years and his future plans are to join the trades and become an operator or mechanic.



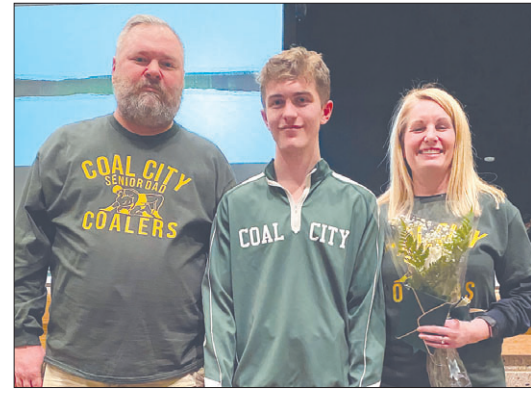
COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Andrew Feisley is escorted by his parents Melinda Feisley and Will Feisley. Andrew has done 4 years in the program. He participated in football for 4 years and future plans are to be a lineman for ComEd.



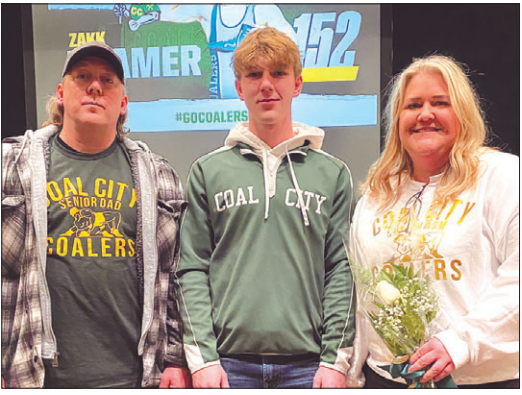
COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Michael Gonzalez is the son of Venesa Gonzalez and Alan Calderon. Michael, a two-year starter, has wrestled three years at CCHS. He has participated in football for 4 years and his future plans are to become a truck driver.



COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Chris Lassiter is escorted by his parents Samantha and Charles Lassiter. Chris is a first year guy who is as coachable as they come. Chris is a musician at heart and has focused on music at CCHS. He is undecided about his future plans.



COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Bohden Vanek is escorted by parents Brian and Julie Vanek. Bohden has done 2 years in the program, is a goal oriented person who comes to practice daily with the idea and plan to make himself and his workout partner better than they were the day before. Future plans are to attend Western Michigan University to study business.



COAL CITY SENIOR wrestler Zakk Kramer is escorted by his parents Heather and Jeff Kramer. Zakk, with three years as a wrestler, has been a part time starter with 10 career wins. He has a good work ethic and improves his wrestling skills daily. Zakk has also participated in soccer and plans on attending Joliet Junior College to study criminal justice.



COAL CITY SENIOR Jocie Widlowski is escorted by her parents Joe and Misty Widlowski. She is a 3 year stat girl for wrestling. She has a tremendous amount of knowledge of wrestling and has done a great job mentoring other statisticians. She has participated in golf, basketball, and softball at CCHS. Her future plans are to attend the University of South Alabama and major in nursing.

Photos by Eric Fisher



Cooper honored on Senior Night

AUDREY COOPER, point guard for the Lady Coalers basketball team, is escorted by her parents Kim and Tim Cooper. Audrey has spent four years in the program. She also participates in soccer and her future plans are to attend college to study environmental sciences.

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"Support Coal City High School Athletes"

Milestone met for YMCA

The Morris Community YMCA capital campaign celebrated a significant milestone last month when the city of Morris Development Review Committee approved the site and facility plan for a new Morris Hospital YMCA.

Construction of the facility, built in partnership with Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers, will begin later this year on land adjacent to Morris Grade School.

The agency announced in 2018 plans for the development of a 50,000-square-foot YMCA and healthcare center in partnership with the hospital.

While the YMCA plans to open this new facility within the next several years, the size, scope, and timing will ultimately be determined by the generosity of the community in support of this project.

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SECOND IN STATE and three state champions were awarded to the Coal City Middle School wrestling team on Saturday. Bring home the trophy were (from left, front) Ryder Gill, Landon Bomba, Owen Petersen, Tyson Price, Cooper Morris, Jason Piatak, Jake Munsterman, and Brantley Brooks. Back row: Coach Piatak, Coach Rodriguez, Coach Morris, Brody D'Orazio, Aidan Edmonds, Cole Russell, Fabian Hernandez, Theo Fritz, Alex Carlson, Coach Petersen, Coach Rivera and Coach Lindemuth.

Courtesy photo

State runner-up

CCMS matmen finish with three state champions

The Coal City Middle School wrestling team had six of 14 state qualifiers place on Friday and Saturday during the IESA Class 1A state finals held in DeKalb, IL.

Seventh grader Jake Munsterman (75) and eighth graders Owen Petersen (95) and Cooper Morris (100) were crowned state champions.

Placing second for the Warriors was sixth grader Ryder Gill (65) while Brody D'Orazio (167), eighth grade, won the third place medal and Brantley Brooks (70) finished sixth.

As a team, the two-time defending state champions brought home the second place trophy after Vandalia finished with 164 points while Coal City had 149.5.

Since the IESA began the state-sanctioned tournaments in 1980, the Warriors have claimed two firsts (2022, 2019), four seconds (2023, 2003,

1991, 1985), four thirds (2018, 2011, 2001, 1989) and two fourths (2017, 1981).

While a Munsterman (4-0) shutout Cole Smith (Port Byron Riverdale) 7-0 to claim the championship at 75 pounds. He started with a quick :39 second pin before advancing from the quarterfinal with a 14-8 decision. His semifinal victory was over Owen Sowards (Taylor Ridge Rockridge) by 9-0 major decision.

Jake was a 2022 state runner-up. He ends his season with a perfect 47-0 record.

Petersen (4-0) started with a 23-8 tech fall over Henry Watson (Eureka) before getting a 13-1 major decision and 11-4 decision. In the first place match he shutout Max Philpot (Vandalia) 3-0.

Petersen was a state runner-up in 2022 and finishes his season with a 47-1 record.

Morris (4-0) ruled the 100-pound class for the second straight year with an opening fall 2:54 and quarterfinal 6-0 decision. His semifinal win against Landen Lage (Gibson) was by 1-0. His championship match against Ej Chaon (LeRoy) was just as close as he won it 1-0.

Morris is now a two-time State champion and finishes the season with a 47-2 record.

Gill (3-1) put up a heck of a battle at 65 pounds where he finished second for the second year in a row. His only loss was by sudden victory when Miles Davis of (Johnsburg JHS) slipped away for an escape in a 4-2 loss. Gill was quick in his first three wins, getting pins of :19, :25 and :27 seconds.

At 167, D'Orazio (4-1) placed 3rd after losing his semifinal to eventual state champion Ben Buis (El Paso-Gridley). D'Orazio won his

first two bouts by 1:54 and 1:57 pins. He came out of the wrestlingback semi a 12-1 winner over Liam Kilgore (Mackinaw Dee-Mack). In the battle to decide third place he stiffed Kegan Dean (Roxana) in 1:59.

Brooks had the longest road to travel, having to wrestle five times in order to reach the fifth place match. Brooks (3-3) started with a 4-0 win, then lost 12-2, then won 4-2 and 3-2. He made the cons. semifinal but lost 7-3, placing him in the 5th place match against Julian Rodriguez (Gibson City) who won it 8-0.

Warriors who qualified for state but did not place included 70—Landon Bomba (1-2); 80—Jason Piatak (1-2); 95—Tyson Price (2-2); 126—Alex Carlson (2-2); 135—Fabian Hernandez (0-2); 145—Theo Fritz (0-2); 155—Aidan Edmonds (1-2) and 185—Cole Russell (1-2).



STATE CHAMPION! Coal City's Cooper Morris stands at the top after capturing first place at 100 pounds during the IESA state tournament held Saturday in DeKalb.



EIGHTH GRADE WARRIOR Owen Petersen claimed first place at 95 pounds during the IESA state wrestling finals on Saturday.



COAL CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL seventh grader Jake Munsterman became a state champion on Saturday when he went 4-0 in the state tournament at 75 pounds.

Courtesy photo

Hang a state champion on your wall! **Coaler State Wrestling poster TAKING PREORDERS**

We need an idea how many are interested in high quality 16 x 24 posters on card stock so we're taking preorders at \$22 each (no shipping charges). Call or stop by **The Coal City Courant** 271 S. Broadway, Coal City 815-634-0315

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