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# COAL CITY COURANT

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## Coal City considering 7% water rate increase

BY ANN GILL  
EDITOR

The village of Coal City is reviewing the costs of water and sewer services and it's looking like a 7% increase will be passed on to consumers.

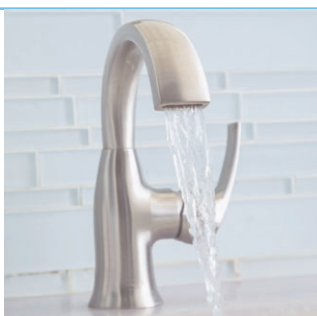
The rate is based on cost of operation, maintenance and replacement, plus capital improvement and debt service that is then divided by the total estimated usage in one year.

The village anticipates it will cost around \$1.9 million to run the department with \$1.3 million of that going to operations—that's up 3.26% over the prior year.

With a projection of 120,800 gallons of consumption in the coming year, the proposal before the Village Board is for a 7% increase.

"If the Village did not have a decelerating rate structure, the flat rate cost for 1,000 gallons of water would equal \$15.85," city administration Matt Fritz said. If the town was reliant solely upon the rate, an increase of 13.72% would be

WHAT YOU ARE PAYING	
WATER AND SEWER	
1-5,999 gallons	\$13.67
6,000-20,999 gallons	\$15.23
21,000-40,999 gallons	\$14.61
WATER ONLY	
1-5,999 gallons	\$8.90
6,000-20,999 gallons	\$9.90
21,000-40,999 gallons	\$9.50



WHAT YOU COULD BE PAYING	
WATER AND SEWER	
1-5,999 gallons	\$14.63
6,000-20,999 gallons	\$16.30
21,000 gallons-plus	\$15.63
WATER ONLY	
1-5,999 gallons	\$9.51
6,000-20,999 gallons	\$10.60
21,000 gallons-plus	\$10.16

The village will also continue to collect a \$5 per month surcharge [\$10 per billing] to each bill to cover the cost of planned water treatment plant upgrades and expansion  
Waste removal fee is set to stay the same at \$23 per month or \$46 per billing.

necessary.

According to figures provided by the Village, between February 2022 and February 2023, the village billed over \$1.66 million. The average billed to consumers up to 4,999 gallons

was \$43.54 based on a per 1,000 gallon cost of \$13.67. Customers consuming between 6,000 and 20,999 gallons paid \$15.23 per 1,000 gallons and those utilizing more than 21,000 gallons paid \$14.61 per 1,000 gallons for an average bi-

monthly cost

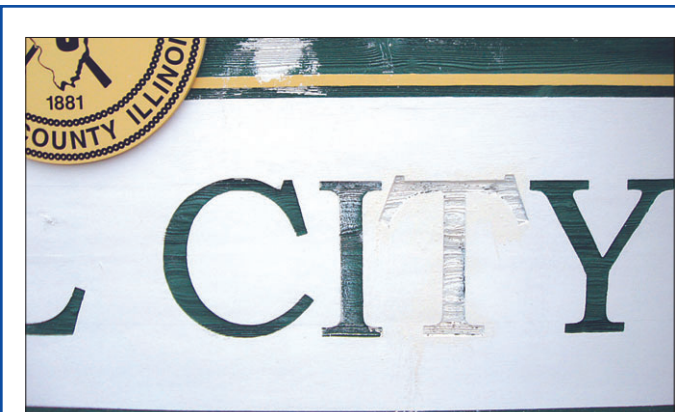
According to Fritz, "The amount of revenues collected from the water/sewer rate represents 94% of the annual revenues for the utility; the remainder comes from other line items such as a penalty fees which offset the remaining annual expenses for providing this utility."

Under the proposed rate structure up to 5,999 gallons would pay \$14.63 per 1,000 gallons. Those consuming between 6,000 and 20,999 would be billed \$16.30 per 1,000 gallons and 21,000 gallons or more will be billed \$15.63.

The average utility user falls in the middle category with an average consumption of 9,000 gallons, Fritz estimates the overall bill in the coming year for those users will be around \$194.

"The past year has brought with it some large inflationary pressure while the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency [IEPA] requirements for water production require a planned treatment plant expansion. In order to

SEE RATES, PAGE 2



Courtesy photo

THE COAL CITY Police Department and other local police agencies are investigating a series of incidents that resulted in the damage of multiple school and community signs. The damages discovered on the morning of Friday, March 17.

## Community welcome sign defaced, similar damage in other towns

BY ANN GILL  
EDITOR

Local police agencies are combining efforts to find out who is responsible for spray painting crude words and anatomical images on public property.

The motive for the damage is unclear, but someone with a can of spray paint left their mark on signs across multiple towns. Given the quality of graffiti, it was not the work of an artist.

Sgt. Tom Logan, of the Coal City Police Department, said the village's welcome sign on the southeast corner of Division Street [Route 113] and Carbon Hill Road was van-

dalized with the F word written on the sign, as well as several images of male genitalia. Additionally, one of the letters in city was painted over.

The damage was limited to the one sign in Coal City, however others were vandalized in the towns of Wilmington and Braidwood.

Logan said the damage was discovered at 9:16 a.m. on Friday, March 17. Officers began checking for vandalism around the district's schools and community properties when word came that damage had been discovered in the other towns.

The Wilmington Police

SEE SIGNS, PAGE 2

## Ultimate Rides making the move to Braidwood

BY MARNEY SIMON  
EDITOR

Two and a half years after plans to move Ultimate Rides from its Coal City location to Hickory Street in Braidwood, an end date is officially in sight.

This week, city leaders from Braidwood and the owners of Ultimate Rides held a ceremonial groundbreaking ceremony for the new dealership, with plans for the building to start going up over the next few weeks. Plans for the site include 11 bays on the north side of the building, as well as a vehicle display berm visible from I-55.

"The shell of the building will be put up in about two weeks," Ultimate Rides owner Nick Bulanda said. "They're going to start on it and by the end of April the whole shell should be done. We're hoping to be open and operational by mid- to late-summer."

The specialty car dealership applied for their building permit last month. Retention



ULTIMATE RIDES expects the new building to go up at the Hickory Street site in Braidwood over the next few weeks, with the dealership opening up by mid-summer.

and infrastructure work, as well as site grading, began last year.

Bulanda said that much like other businesses, construction of the new site was delayed thanks to the pandemic.

"Covid is the main reason," Bulanda said of the delay. "We really wanted to put the building up back when we got the property, but all of the bids that we received increased by about 30-40% when Covid

came around. So, right when we were ready to start, everything went up almost double for material costs, and about a third in labor costs. So it just was beyond our reach to be able to afford it."

Ultimate Rides currently makes its home in Coal City, where they made about \$8.5 million in sales in 2022. The company unusually only keeps an inventory of 40 to 50 vehicles at a time, but plans to increase that inventory once in

the Braidwood location.

"Our anticipated revenue here will be \$12-14 million because we're going to have more room, so we're going to be able to hold double the inventory," Bulanda said.

The company owns the location in Coal City, and Bulanda said they plan to hold on to that property and put them up for lease, although they haven't ruled out selling

SEE MOVE, PAGE 2

## Coal City awarded \$350,000 to help homeowners

BY ANN GILL  
EDITOR

The village of Coal City's efforts to seek funding to help homeowners update their property has proven successful, as another round of funding has been acquired.

A program offered by the Illinois Housing Development Authority [IHDA] will provide \$350,000 to assist low income homeowners cover the cost of

needed repairs based on health, safety, energy, efficiency and accessibility.

The Home Repair and Accessibility Program [HRAP] was established to help low income and disabled or mobility impaired persons remain in their home. In turn this improves the health and well-being of the occupants, preserves existing affordable housing stock and provides an investment into communities.

The village, assisted by the North Central Illinois Council of Governments [NCICG] submitted an application to IHDA last fall. The village has been selected to receive a portion of the \$16 million available to fund local improvements valued up to \$45,000 per home.

Unlike the housing rehabilitation program provided through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity [DCEO], there is

no local funding match and it has a broader scope in how the funds can be used.

At its meeting last week, the Village Board formally accepted the grant and authorized NCICG to serve as the grant administrator for the funds.



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# Early voting, mail-in voting information for 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. and Sunday, April 2, 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](http://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 postmarked 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](mailto:elections@grundycountyil.gov).

## Rates

adjust the rate upward for water only users by an average of 65 cents setting the rates at 9.57 for up to 5,999 gallons, \$10.60 for 6,000 to 20,999 gallons and \$10.16 for those utilizing 21,000 or more gallons.

The suggested rate increase has been included within the village's tentative fiscal year 2024 budget and it will be up for discussion and a vote when the Village Board meets this evening [Wednesday, March 22].

As for garbage collection fees, Fritz said, "although the rates will be increasing slightly above total collections, the Village Board may utilize existing fund balance to avoid an increase in the garbage collection portion of the bill for this upcoming year."

That means the cost to put your trash—garbage, recycling and yard waste—will remain \$23 per month.

The garbage fund is slated to end the fiscal year with a \$35,000 balance, however without an increase that will decrease in the coming year and likely result in a \$2 per month increase the coming year.

The village plans to continue collecting a \$5 per month surcharge that goes toward the annual debt payments associated with the sanitary modernization project. Those funds are put in a dedicated fund for loan repayment.

The first full year debt payment of \$293,375 is due prior to December 2023, however the village will fall short of the full payment.

"In order to collect the total amount, an increase in the surcharge of \$10.20 would be necessary to collect the full payment. Rather than passing this increase onto the utility payers, surplus TIF funds have been allocated to cover the planned shortfall of \$99,200," Fritz said.

The proposal would also

# Unit 1 Students of the Week



COAL CITY ELEMENTARY School Students of the Week for March 22 are (from left): Haley Beckers, Emma Hansen, Emma Connelly, Mackenzie Miner, Marshall Giltner and Sebastian Maldonado.



AUBREY JENSEN  
Middle School



BRADLEY STREET  
Middle School

## Signs

Department was the first to make public notice of the damage when it posted on social media that several jurisdictions were investigating an incident of criminal defacement. The damage in Wilmington was discovered on the electronic events sign at Kahler Road and Wildcat Drive, as well as a historic limestone engraved sign that is located on the high school campus.

According to reports, the person responsible for the damage wrote a derogatory statement on the sign.

Wilmington Police report the damage at the high school occurred between 1:25 and 1:30 a.m. on March 17. Surveillance cameras focused on the school parking lot captured images of a white pickup truck in the parking lot at that time.

In Braidwood, a similar instance of vandalism was reported near Reed-Custer High School. The main digital sign in front of the high school was vandalized with foul language, which was quickly addressed by grounds crews.

Braidwood Police Chief Todd Lyons said the BPD is actively investigating the incident, but so far do not have any leads.

The damaged sign in Coal City is located on the high school campus, northwest of the main parking lot.

Logan said he checked the school's parking lot cameras, however due to the distance and location of the tennis courts there was nothing conclusive on the tape.

Public works employees with the village of Coal City were able to remove the damage, and according to reports out of Wilmington, school officials were able to quickly cover the sign.

Sgt. Jason Clark, Coal City Police Department's investigator, is currently working with the other agencies on the investigation to determine who is responsible.

Logan said the crime comes with a charge of criminal damage to government supported property.

Anyone with information regarding the damage discovered March 17 should contact Sgt. Clark at 815-634-2341.



COAL CITY EARLY Childhood Center Students of the Week for March 22 are Vivian Cannon (left) and Ariya Devries.



COAL CITY INTERMEDIATE School Students of the Week for March 22 are (from left): Hailey Fisher, Timmy Wegner, Jaxson Parks and Cali Ness.

## Door decor class at library

Looking to enhance your Easter decor? Sign up to take part in the Coal City Public Library District's Easter egg door sign class at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 29.

Create your own Easter Egg door sign at just \$5 per person. Registration is required and can be done online or in-person at the library. Participants must be a CCPLD cardholder.

## Library road trip

It's time for a road trip, a library road trip with an awesome prize at the end.

Visit participating libraries between Saturday, March 25 and Sunday, April 30 to collect a souvenir and get a stamp in your passport book.

The more libraries you visit the more times your name will be entered into a drawing for an awesome gift basket. You must turn in the passport book at your home library.

Participating libraries include: Charles B. Phillips Public Library District, Coal City Public Library District, Fossil Ridge Public Library, Joliet Public Library, Manhattan-Elwood Public Library District, Messenger Public Library, Morris Area Public Library, Oswego Public Library District, Plainfield Public Library, Plano Community Library District, Sandwich Public Library District, Seneca Public Library District, Shorewood-Troy Public Library, Somonauk Public Library District, Three Rivers Public Library District, Wilmington Public Library District and Yorkville Public Library.

## Move

the Coal City location outright.

As far as location, Bulanda said it's all about the traffic counts and space.

"The location that we're at now gets 18,000 people who drive by a month," Bulanda said. "Here, it's 33,000 a day. So this location in a month will get 1.1 million in drive by traffic, versus 18,000. What I do know too is, we needed the

land because we needed the room for our trucks. We sell big trucks and where we're at we're kind of landlocked in. We're at a couple of properties there, so, most importantly we needed the property and the land to have all of our stuff. Secondary is the drive by traffic counts. It converts pretty well, and given we have this display hill and a nice big building, I do feel like we're going to get in front of more people and more people will know who we are just by driv-

ing by."

In March of last year, the business paid back the city \$121,000, their portion of an agreement that established a final price on the city-owned land sold to the dealer to build the new site on Hickory Street, next to the Sun Motel.

That price included \$7,000 of TIF incentives that the auto shop paid back as part of the overall deal to move to the new location.

The project was first brought to Braidwood in 2020. But, the plans were delayed several times due to issues on both the city's side and the business side, including drainage issues at the site, as well as issues in the automotive industry spawned by the pandemic, including increased online sales and the reconfiguration of automotive assembly lines which have made obtaining vehicles more difficult.

The city first reached an agreement with Ultimate Rides in September 2020. A redevelopment agreement entered into at that time established that the city would purchase 2.6 acres of land along I-55, in the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) III district, for \$114,000, with the amendment for the additional \$7,000 approved in March of 2021.

Surface, Inc.—the parent company of Ultimate Rides—paid back for the cost of land acquisition and payment for any work the city did on the redevelopment property and any other payments the city made to the developer for costs related to the project, and now owns the property.

City officials estimate that the new business will bring in \$15,000 to \$25,000 in property taxes based on other buildings of a similar size, and approximately \$70,000 in sales tax dollars.

Ultimate Rides buys, builds and sells used custom

cars, trucks and SUVs, outfitting them with lift kits, wheels and tires for all makes and models. Many of its vehicles are in the \$20,000 range or more.

"If I were driving down the highway and I was into this type of truck, and I looked over and I noticed 30 or 40 of them, I would remember the name," Bulanda said about the new location. "I just feel like it's going to be brand awareness. People know who we are, they know what we do, and we cater to a niche market of people and I think if they're interested and they drive by, they'll be pleased with what they see. We're just excited to be here and have the room and finally come to Braidwood like we were planning a couple of years ago."

Nick Bulanda founded the business with his brothers Alex and Jake Bulanda. Jake passed away in 2016.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**EARLY VOTING SITE - GRUNDY COUNTY COURTHOUSE CONSOLIDATED ELECTION - APRIL 4, 2023**

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.

**Please note: Cell phones are not allowed in the Grundy County Courthouse.**

KAY T. OLSON  
GRUNDY COUNTY ELECTION AUTHORITY

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# Madigan, ComEd's patronage history on trial

ComEd has long been a source of political patronage. The company's Deferred Prosecution Agreement with federal prosecutors even references how former House Speaker Michael Madigan's "old-fashioned patronage system" obtained ComEd meter reader jobs for its precinct workers.



**CAPITOL FACTS**  
Rich Miller

tance, to enjoy the groveling. It helped that Madigan's own members complained at the time that the company's services had deteriorated and that ComEd wasn't respecting them when they complained. Madigan couldn't have squeezed the company if his members loved ComEd.

Madigan's wasn't the only patronage network to do this. It was a widespread practice and, as old-timers tell it, became even more important when Mayor Harold Washington, Chicago's first Black mayor, cut some prominent White politicians out of the city's patronage spoils. Madigan came up through a city ward system that was fed by patronage. But his people would always say that because he started his career as an employee of the Illinois Commerce Commission, he didn't much care for utility companies. So, when ComEd did things like fire a bunch of his Statehouse lobbyist allies during a 2007 battle with Senate President Emil Jones and Gov. Rod Blagojevich, he liked them even less. After Blagojevich and Jones departed the scene, Madigan was left as the unrivaled Statehouse king. ComEd bent over backward to get into his good graces and Madigan seemed, at least from a dis-

tributed him, and they did so by paying Madigan's associates through jobs and contracts at ComEd." And he did indeed get a whole lot of those.

And Madigan's top lieutenant Mike McClain made sure ComEd's key executives never forgot that Madigan could turn on them at any moment and the company would go right back into the penalty box. They complied mainly because they didn't want any trouble, and when that compliance led to legislative successes, that, in turn, helped their own careers.

It was likely no accident that, after working closely with Madigan and McClain, ComEd CEO Anne Pramaggiore was being paid \$2.7 million a year, according to Crain's Chicago Business. Pramaggiore is now on trial in the "ComEd 4" bribery case, along with McClain and lobbyists Jay Doherty and John Hooker, a former ComEd official.

The federal government claims that their behavior crossed numerous legal boundaries. The defendants claim, in part, that this was simply the way things were always done.

But times changed, and Madigan's demands became ever-more voracious while the feds were listening in. It was almost like making a U-Turn in front of a police squad car. They're gonna get you for that.

If McClain had any doubt that the feds were looking at both him and Madigan, it should've been confirmed when he decided to cooperate with their investigation into a fraudulent scheme involving a federal immigration program that granted visas to millionaire foreign investors. The feds

asked him at the time, for instance, why he used code words when speaking or writing emails about Madigan.

McClain admitted that he 'referred to Madigan as 'our friend' in e-mails and in public conversations because people might be listening to or reading McClain's conversations," the government claimed in a court filing last month.

## Boating safety course to start April 12 in Bradley

Maximize boating enjoyment with expert instruction from America's Boating Club (the United States Power Squadrons).

The class begins Wednesday April 12 at the North Extension Center of Kankakee Community College (KCC) in Bradley.

You'll gain the skills to make your boating adventures safer and more rewarding. You may also get a reduction in your boat insurance costs.

Those who complete the course will receive a certificate and card required by many states to operate a power boat. This course meets the educational requirements for Illinois boaters born after Jan 1, 1998 to operate a craft with an engine over 10 h.p.

America's Boating Course® (ABC) covers safety equipment (including the new life jacket labels and new the fire extinguisher requirements) navigation aids, light and sound signals, anchoring,

docking, communications afloat, handling adverse conditions, water sports safety, trailering, personal water craft safety, federal and state regulations, as well as knots and lines.

Register using the form in the KCC catalog or on-line at <https://www.enrole.com/kcc/jsp/course.jsp?categoryId=BF75E808&courseId=SAFE-9001>

The ABC class is recognized by the US Coast Guard. It is taught by certified United States Power Squadrons instructors.

The class is from 6:30 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. on five successive Wednesday evenings. Students should come at 6:15 p.m. the first night to receive materials.

Costs: \$12 to KCC; in addition, the materials cost \$55 (pay the instructor at the first class). However, members of the same household may share materials for \$10 per person. Minors need parental signature to attend.

## 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 [will-countygreen.com](http://will-countygreen.com)

## New law would ban Zooming while driving

A new proposal from Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias will prohibit the use of Zoom calls while driving.

As more people have begun working from home since the pandemic, the popularity of applications like Zoom, FaceTime, Teams and WebEx has grown substantially, leading many motorists to conduct videoconference calls from their driver's seat.

"We need to take steps to change the culture surrounding distracted driving, which will lead to more responsible drivers and ultimately save lives," Giannoulias said.

"Zooming takes hands, eyes and minds off the focus of driving. Our goal is that a combination of increased education, stronger laws and tougher enforcement will encourage drivers to change bad behaviors for the better."

House Bill 2431 would make it illegal to use a cell phone or other device to watch

or participate in video conferencing, streaming videos or accessing any social media site.

Drivers who Zoom, watch videos or are otherwise engaged in distracted driving pose a serious threat to other drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, first responders and construction workers.

Under the proposal, motorists would still be able to participate in video conference calls while driving but

only if they use a hands-free device and if its video is turned off.

Violating the law would result in a moving violation ticket and a maximum fine of \$75, \$100 on the second offense, \$125 on the third offense and \$150 for all future offenses. Three moving violations in a year will result in a license suspension.

Last year, 12,700 drivers were convicted of distracted driving.

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

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12:15 PM - Ages 6-12 yrs at Ball Field closest to Community Center

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## First Presbyterian Church to host annual Spring scrap-a-thon

The First Presbyterian Church of Braidwood will be holding a Spring Scrap-A-Thon on Saturday, March 25, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

For just \$40 you can have a fun filled day of scrapping, door prizes, raffles and food. To reserve your spot please call or text Elizabeth Bell at 1-405-820-5944.

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# Talk about the de-extinction movement and bringing back certain species

## EARTH TALK

Questions & Answers About Our Environment

Dear EarthTalk: What's new with the de-extinction movement that's trying to bring back extinct wildlife species?

-- P.L., Danbury, CT

De-extinction, the concept of resurrecting extinct species, has long been a topic of debate among scientists and the general public. In recent years, scientific advances have made it more feasible to bring back extinct species, leading to a renewed interest in doing so. The non-profit Revive & Restore was created in 2012 by Stewart Brand (founder of the Whole Earth Catalog) and Ryan Phelan to help usher in a new age of conservation based on the implementation of de-extinction strategies.

One of the most significant developments has been the successful cloning of extinct species, such as the Pyrenean ibex and the bucardo, both wild goat species.

In 2009, scientists successfully cloned a Pyrenean ibex, but the newborn goat died shortly after birth due to respiratory failure. In 2021, researchers successfully cloned a black-footed ferret, an endangered species that was declared extinct in 1979.

The cloned ferret, named Elizabeth Ann, was born in a lab and has since been released into the wild to help boost the population of the species.

Another development has been the use of genetic engineering to recreate extinct species. Scientists can extract DNA from fossils, museum specimens or frozen tissue samples and use it to create an embryo of the extinct species.

In 2013, scientists success-



**THE BIRTH OF this black-footed ferret named Elizabeth Ann on December 10, 2020 marked the first time a U.S. endangered species has been successfully cloned.**

fully created a hybrid elephant-mammoth embryo using DNA from a woolly mammoth and an Asian elephant. The embryo was not brought to term, but the research demonstrates the possibility of using genetic engineering to create extinct species.

The de-extinction movement is not without its critics, however. Many argue that the focus on de-extinction takes resources and attention away from conservation efforts aimed at protecting and preserving endangered species.

Others worry about the ecological implications of reintroducing extinct species to the environment. The ecosystem may have changed since the species went extinct, and reintroducing them could have unintended consequences, such as disrupting existing relationships between organisms and the environment or spreading disease.

Despite these concerns, the de-extinction movement continues to move forward. The for-profit Colossal Biosciences has raised \$225 million over four rounds of venture capital investment to fund its efforts to bring back Dodo birds, Tasmanian tigers and woolly mammoths,

among other extinct species, using genetic engineering.

In the case of the mammoth, the company is working on the creation of an elephant-mammoth hybrid embryo that could be carried to term by an elephant surrogate.

The researchers hope to release these Frankenstein mammoths into the wild in the Arctic tundra, where they would help restore the ecosystem by grazing on the grasslands and helping to prevent permafrost from melting.

There are many challenges that must be overcome before extinct species can be successfully brought back. In numbers.

However, advances in genetic engineering and cloning technologies have made it increasingly feasible to resurrect extinct species, and the possibility of bringing back species such as the woolly mammoth has captured the public's imagination.

As the de-extinction movement continues to evolve, it will be important to balance the potential benefits with the ecological and ethical considerations involved.

EarthTalk® is a 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. Send questions to: [question@earth-talk.org](mailto:question@earth-talk.org).

# Trout season opens April 1

The 2023 Illinois Spring Trout fishing season is coming to three area locations starting Saturday, April 1.

Bird Park Quarry in Kankakee, Rock Creek in Kankakee River State Park and Lake Milliken in the Des Plaines Conservation Area, Wilmington will all be stocked with rainbow trout.

Rock Creek will open for catch and release-only fishing on March 18. On April 1 trout may be kept to eat.

Anglers will need both a fishing license and an Inland Trout Stamp to participate, unless they are under the age of 16, blind, disabled or are an Illinois resident on leave from active duty in the Armed Forces.

Licenses and trout stamps are available for purchase on the Illinois Department of Resources (IDNR) website and at DNR Direct license and permit locations, including Angelo's Outdoor Sports in Wilmington.

The trout fishing at Milliken Lake is allowed at 5 a.m. on April 1. Anyone attempting to take trout before the legal harvest season opening will be issued citations.

The IDNR stocks more than 80,000 rainbow trout each year, with 58 ponds, lakes and streams throughout the state being stocked for the spring season, and an additional 80,000 trout stocked for the fall season.

For more information on trout seasons and other Illinois fishing opportunities, check the website at [www.ifishillinois.org](http://www.ifishillinois.org).

For more information about all site regulations, anglers should contact individual sites that will be stocked with catchable-size trout. Anglers are reminded to check the opening time of their favorite sites prior to the opening date.

The state reminds sportsmen that new licenses are required April 1 for the 2023 year.

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# Morris Hospital urges Medicaid participants to prepare for upcoming renewal

Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers is reminding residents currently enrolled in the Medicaid program to make sure their address is up-to-date with the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) as the federal Public Health Emergency and State of Illinois Disaster Proclamation related to the COVID pandemic come to a close on May 11, 2023.

HFS will soon begin the process of re-evaluating eligi-

bility for almost 4 million Illinoisans currently enrolled in the Medicaid program. This will involve sending a renewal form to Medicaid participants that is critical to continued Medicaid enrollment.

"For everyone currently enrolled in Medicaid, it is imperative that HFS has your current file on address so that you can receive this important paperwork about your Medicaid healthcare insurance," said Alex Blumenshine, Director of Patient Financial

Services at Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers. "If HFS doesn't have your correct address, they won't be able to send the form to you, and you could risk losing your Medicaid health insurance."

In addition to making sure their address is up-to-date with Medicaid, officials at Morris Hospital say it will be imperative over the coming months for Medicaid participants to watch their mail for their renewal notice so they can be sure to complete and submit it.

According to HFS, renewal forms will be sent about one month before they are due. Those who don't submit their renewal or no longer qualify for Medicaid could lose their coverage one month after their renewal date.

Update your address with the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services by calling 877-805-5312, option 8, or by visiting [medicaid.illinois.gov](http://medicaid.illinois.gov).

# The Forest Preserve to host March 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.

**Goal: draw, color and create your own artwork to express encouragement, positive attitude, funny humor, or just feelings from past memories.**

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Photos by Amy Walker

COAL CITY GOALKEEPER Chloe Plueger was impressive during the season opener against Plainfield Central with 18 saves.

## Lady Coalers return with eight starters



THROW IN— Coal City senior Peyton Benson looks to pass the ball inbounds during last week's meet at home.

The Coal City soccer team battled the weather just as much as their opponent during a blustery home opener on Thursday.

The Lady Coalers hosted Plainfield Central despite 15 mph winds and pelting rainfall. In the end they scored a couple of goals but the visitors had the edge, winning 3-2.

Coal City goalkeeper Chloe Plueger was impressive, stopping 18 shots on goal during her first-time start for the Coalers.

Score for the Lady Coalers were Ayli Castle, assisted by Kylee Kennel. The other score was made by junior Maddie Gomez off an assist by Azra Malovski.

"We have higher expectations with the return of eight out of 11 starters this season," said coach Todd Painter. "We also have a full roster of talented and eager players to fill in our gaps."

There four returning senior starters including Cara Planeta who led the team in scoring a year ago. Other seniors include Peyton Benson, Audrey Cooper, Mariah Pena, Kayla Connelly, Beth Greene, Reagan Robson and Malovski.

"We hope to improve on last year's record of 10-9. We will be looking to senior Cara, last year's goal leader, to repeat and improve upon her total. We will also be looking for leadership from seniors Cooper and Malovski," Painter said.

The six juniors who have been hustling to the ball include Cassidy Jenke, Aubrey Mellen, Maddie Gomez, Kimberly Perez, Makayla DeMarse and Kiley McKim.

The four sophomores, two of them returning starters, include Aylianna Castle, Corina Barkley, Kylee Kennel and Plueger.

"We glad to be able to play our first game and look forward to better weather," Painter concluded.

## Coalers get off with a good start

The Coal City varsity baseball team opened its season last Wednesday at Ottawa versus Marquette, walking away with a 3-1 victory.

Marquette ended up last year third in the state with 31 wins, and returning seven starters so it was a notable win for the Coalers.

Coal City senior Carter Garrelts was the winning pitcher going five innings recording 11 strikeouts, three walks, two hits and one run.

Austin Davy finished up the last two innings and recorded the save. At the plate Lucas Nolan had two hits Jimmy Feeney added a double and two runs scored. Cason Headley collected two RBIs in the game, including the game winning RBI.

Coach Jerry McDowell, who returns to the dugout after six years being away, commented on the opening win.

"We played really well today for the first game. Carter was really composed on the mound and hit his spots and we came up with some crucial two strike at bats," McDowell said.

McDowell returns after coaching for the Joliet Slammers semi-pro baseball organization. For 22 years McDowell was head coach for the Coalers until he retired at the end of the 2017 season. Greg Wills took over for four years, last year coaching Coal City to a 20-9 season.

"It was a great experience coaching for the Slammers but it's great to be back in Coal City. I learned a lot while with the Slammers, especially their long schedule of 100 games. It

was a lot of fun with a lot of memories up there, including winning the league championship," McDowell said. "But when the Coal City position opened up this year and no one else in the district was interested, I got asked back in July if I was interested and I said most certainly yes."

The Coalers graduated a nice group of seniors but McDowell says that shouldn't be a problem with the talent he has out for this year's team.

"I've got good numbers this year with 10 seniors and 12 juniors. We didn't have cuts, we kept 22 players, which is a lot of kids," McDowell admits. "I've emphasized there's not gonna be a lot of playing time because we're gonna be spreading it around. The kids have worked hard and done a nice job. It's tough to tell who is locked in as starters just yet, especially since we've mostly been inside the gym," the coach said.

"I think all of them understand they're competing for playing time on daily basis and, getting after it. It's showing so far, we've made pretty good strides and in two weeks, we just need a break in the weather and get some games in. We kept everybody who wanted to play...let them work hard and get better on their own."

He said the season opening victory was one he opens will play out often.

"It was nice to get 16 players in the game and it was a total team effort and a quality win. We can build a lot from this game," McDowell commented.

On Monday they moved

their home game to Minooka to take advantage of a dry field. It ended up being a heart-breaker as the Coalers lost 3-2 in the sixth inning when the Indians scored the game winning run off an error.

Lefty Caden Kuder was on the mound for the Coalers, lasting six innings, allowing five hits and two runs while striking out eight and walking none.

Derek Carlson, Feeney and Olson all had hits for the Coalers.

"We're looking at defense and pitching right now. We've really stressed that in practices. We hit pretty much every day but you know, but when you get outside and see pitchers in a different setting, you never know what's going to happen there. I mean, you can always get off pitching machines all day you all time that you want to inside but it's a different story when you get out so sure. We're defense and pitching and you know hit it's gonna get better and better as we go along and get outside and nicer weather like it will be for everybody."

Coal City hosts Pontiac tonight (Wednesday), plays at Joliet West Thursday before hosting Beecher for a double header on Saturday.

"We have a very demanding schedule with several good baseball schools in there. It's going to be a good experience for everybody to play that schedule. We might take some losses that we normally wouldn't get, but in the long run, it's gonna pay off come playoff time to play those bigger schools. I can't wait."

## Coaler spring sports schedules

COAL CITY HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS VARSITY SOCCER	
March 23	.....@Morris.....4:30 p.m.
March 28	.....host Mendota.....4:30 p.m.
March 30	.....@Wilmington.....4:30 p.m.
April 5	.....host Yorkville.....4:30 p.m.
April 6	.....host Herscher.....4:30 p.m.
April 8	.....host Ottawa.....10 a.m.
April 11	.....@CA.....4:30 p.m.
April 13	.....@Lisle.....4:30 p.m.
April 18	.....host Manteno.....4:30 p.m.
April 20	.....@Peotone.....4:30 p.m.
April 22	.....host Lady Coaler Shootout.....9 a.m.
April 27	.....host Reed-Custer.....4:30 p.m.
May 2	.....@Streator.....4:30 p.m.
May 4	.....@Plano.....4:30 p.m.
May 9	.....host IHSA Regional.....TBA
May 10	.....@IHSA Regional.....TBA
May 11, 12	.....host IHSA Regional.....TBA
May 13	.....@IHSA Regional.....TBA
BOYS VARSITY BASEBALL	
March 22	.....host Pontiac.....4:30 p.m.
March 23	.....@Joliet West.....4:30 p.m.
March 25	.....host Beecher.....11 a.m. & 1 p.m.
March 27	.....host Peotone.....4:30 p.m.
March 28	.....@Peotone.....4:30 p.m.
March 30	.....@Bishop Mac.....4:30 p.m.
April 1	.....@Plainfield East.....11 a.m.
April 1	.....@Plainfield East JV.....1 p.m.
April 3	.....@Wilmington.....4:30 p.m.
April 4	.....host Wilmington.....4:30 p.m.
April 6	.....@CA.....4:30 p.m.
April 8	.....@Plainfield North DH.....10 a.m.
April 10	.....@Manteno.....4:30 p.m.
April 11	.....host Manteno.....4:30 p.m.
April 15	.....host Morris.....10 a.m.
April 15	.....host Morris JV.....12 p.m.
April 17	.....host Streator.....4:30 p.m.
April 18	.....@Streator.....4:30 p.m.
April 24	.....@Herscher.....4:30 p.m.
April 25	.....host Herscher.....4:30 p.m.
April 26	.....@Seneca.....4:30 p.m.
May 1	.....host Reed-Custer.....4:30 p.m.
May 2	.....@Reed-Custer.....4:30 p.m.
May 4	.....host Plano.....4:30 p.m.
May 8	.....@Lisle.....4:30 p.m.
May 9	.....host Lisle.....4:30 p.m.
May 12	.....host Bradley-Bourbonnais.....4:30 p.m.
May 17, 20	.....host IHSA Regionals.....TBA
GIRLS VARSITY SOFTBALL	
March 23	.....host Plainfield North.....4:30 p.m.
March 27	.....host Peotone.....4:30 p.m.
March 28	.....@Peotone.....4:30 p.m.
March 29, 30	.....@WJOL Tourn. TBA.....4:30 p.m.
March 31	.....host Joliet Central.....4:30 p.m.
April 1	.....@Bishop Mac.....4:30 p.m.
April 3	.....@Wilmington.....4:30 p.m.
BOYS & GIRLS TRACK AND FIELD	
March 27	.....@Seneca Multi-Team.....4 p.m.
April 4	.....host RC w/Wilmington.....4:30 p.m.
April 11	.....@Seneca Multi-Team.....4 p.m.
April 14	.....@Irish Relays @Seneca.....4 p.m.
April 17	.....@Wilmington.....4:30 p.m.
April 21	.....@Plano.....4:30 p.m.
April 24	.....@Seneca FS Invite-boys.....4 p.m.
April 25	.....@Seneca FS Invite-girls.....3 p.m.
April 28	.....@Herscher Invite.....4 p.m.
May 4	.....@I-8 Confrence.....3 p.m.
May 8	.....host Black Diamond Classic.....4 p.m.
May 12	.....@Seneca girls IHSA Sectional.....4 p.m.
May 18-20	.....@EIU Charleston girls State Finals.....TBA
May 19	.....@Seneca boys IHSA Sectional.....TBA
May 25-27	.....@TBA boys State Finals.....TBA
VARSITY BOYS TENNIS	
March 30	.....host Kankakee.....4:30 p.m.
April 1	.....@Lincoln-Way Cent. Quad.....8 a.m.
April 4	.....host Princeton.....4:30 p.m.
April 8	.....@Joliet West Quad.....8 a.m.
April 10	.....@Yorkville.....4:30 p.m.
April 15	.....@East Aurora Quad.....9 a.m.
April 18	.....host Lisle.....4:30 p.m.
April 20	.....@Kankakee.....4:30 p.m.
April 24	.....host Minooka.....4:30 p.m.
April 27	.....@Streator.....4:30 p.m.
May 1	.....host Pontiac.....4:30 p.m.
May 4	.....host Morris.....4:30 p.m.
May 9	.....@LaSalle Peru.....4:30 p.m.
May 11	.....@Mendota.....4:30 p.m.
May 15	.....@Bradley-Bourbonnais.....4:30 p.m.
May 19	.....@IHSA Sectional.....TBA
May 20	.....host IHSA Sectional.....TBA
May 25-27	.....@IHSA State Finals.....TBA

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