

Legislators share some good news



Lady Coalers tackle Tuscola



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A new budget for Coal City

Spending plan takes into account inflation, capital projects, staffing

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

The village of Coal City will spend \$16.57 million in the upcoming fiscal year, a plan that takes into account capital projects, staffing changes and inflation.

"Although the pandemic emergency has ceased, the remedies that came along with it have returned inflation into the economy and increased costs for goods, staffing and service provision," Village Administrator Matt Fritz said.

That's \$2.1 million more than anticipated revenue so town leaders plan to closed the gap by spending

down fund balances and utilizing tax increment financing dollars [TIF] for qualified expenses.

Coal City's fund balance includes dollars the town received from the American Rescue Plan [ARP] and plan to utilize to complete utility improvements in the coming months.

The budget reflects a 24.5% increase in spending and a 20.6% increase in revenue over the current fiscal year.

The budget was presented and approved by the Village Board April 12. The administrator and town trustees met weekly to review the wants and needs of the village's various departments.

Noting a substantial increase in goods and services, Fritz said, "department heads have needed to evaluate expenditures and proposed replacements in light of the increase cost of parts, new equipment and regular budget items."

For example the budgeted cost of gasoline and diesel fuel in fiscal year 2022 was \$57,391 and in 2023 that rose to \$73,205.

"Previously, there has been moderation in the gasoline cost by which the trend would cause the line items to increase for a year or two and then decrease when the goods came back to its overall trend. It is expected that much of the inflation to these line

items will not be removed in the future; the new adjusted costs are likely their new level," Fritz said.

The administrator noted the cost of salt and chlorine used at the water treatment plant had to be adjusted to reflect increases in prices, as have utility costs and even the price of postage.

The 2024 budget also takes into account staffing changes resulting from retirements and resignations.

Personnel costs are outlined within the town's operational expenses and include full and part-time employees.

Compensation for some of the employees is divided among funds

depending on their job functions, specifically within administration.

Public works staff are split between the general and utility fund and the police staff is wholly supported by general fund proceeds, Fritz explained.

The operational expenses within this year's spending plan come to \$8.2 million, an increase of nearly 11% from the 2023 budget. The budget includes \$3.8 million for personnel costs with about 60% of those dollars earmarked for law enforcement.

As a result of some turnover in the police department, the budget

SEE BUDGET, PAGE 2



Courtesy photo

THE UNIT 1 Board of Education recognized the service of outgoing members Robert Bianchetta and Chuck Lander. The two men opted not to seek re-election this spring and will depart the Board at the end of the month after a combined 27 years of service.

Unit 1 bids board members farewell

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

The Unit 1 Board of Education is changing as members Robert Bianchetta and Chuck Lander finish their terms at end of the month. Their seats being filled by two newly elected members.

Combined, they have served the school district for 27 years—Bianchetta for 16 years and Lander for 11.

"They have done some amazing things for our community and our school district and we will definitely miss them," Unit 1 Superintendent Chris Spencer said of the outgoing members.

Lander and Bianchetta opted not to seek re-election this spring opening up two seats that will be filled by Cynthia Klein and Daniel Englehardt.

Englehardt previously served on the Board having been appointed to a short-term vacancy. This will be Klein's first term of service. They will be sworn in when the Board reorganizes early next month.

Bianchetta and Lander were recognized by the superintendent and fellow board members at the start of the April meeting. Each was presented with a crystal plaque by Board president Ken P. Miller in appreciation for their years of service.

"Board membership is a thankless job, where one puts what's best for the district ahead of their own interests. They do this for no pay, committing two Wednesdays a month away from their families and we appreciate all they have done," Spencer said.

Bianchetta served on various committees most recently on Board Policy, Insurance and Transportation Committees, as he was the district's representative to the Illinois Association of School Board's Three Rivers Division.

Lander has represented the district on the Grundy Area Vocational Center [GAVC] Board of Control and was the Board appointee to the district Athletic Committee.

"We can't thank these gentleman enough for their dedication to the school district over the years," Spencer said.



Courtesy photo

COAL CITY HIGH School's chapter of Future Business Leaders of America [FBLA] took part in the annual state leadership conference and event competition. Taking part were [from left, row one]: Kiley McKim, Peyton Benson, Nyah Planeta, Kylee Kennell and Wyleigh Serena. Row two Gavin Chernesky, Luke Crater, Logan Hawkins, Luke Hawkins, Jackson Wilcock and Brady Ehman.

FBLA members medal at state contest

Coal City High School's chapter of Future Business Leaders of America [FBLA] took part in the annual state leadership conference and events competition last weekend.

Coal City had 12 students enrolled in the state event competition with two students placing at the contest held in Springfield

Luke Crater earned third place in UX Design and Jackson Wilcock, took third place in the category of Future

Business Leader.

Over 1,400 students attended the conference with competitors from 75 schools across the state.

The awards were part of a comprehensive competitive events program sponsored annually by Illinois Future Business Leaders of America-Phi Beta Lambda, Inc. (FBLA-PBL). Individuals, teams, and local chapters are encouraged to compete in any of over 75 different events representing a wide range of

activities and the business and leadership development focus of FBLA-PBL.

Also competing at the state contest were Peyton Benson, healthcare administration; Josh Ritchie, advertising; Kiley McKim, business communications; Brady Ehman, computer problem solving; Nyah Planeta, personal finance; Logan Hawkins, accounting; Luke Hawkins, parliamentary procedure; Gavin Chernesky, cybersecurity; Kylee

SEE FBLA, PAGE 2

School makeover begins

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

The fitness room at Coal City High School is getting a makeover, the first of what will likely be a series of facility upgrades over the next few years.

The fitness space is one of several areas within the high school targeted for improvement by the Unit 1 Board of Education last December.

The space was constructed in the late 1990s as part of building addition project. The

addition originally divided the space by a windowed wall with an open practice area on one side and weight room on the other.

Teaching and coaching staff who work in that area suggested the space could be better utilized if opened up and modernized.

District's architects designed it so the spaces will be open, a fresh coat of paint applied, new flooring and electrical upgrades to accommodate the main focus of the improvement—new fitness

equipment including treadmills, exercise bikes and weights.

The Board of Education directed architects and staff to move forward with the project in February and during the first week of April, contractors were in the building taking down the windows and opening up the space.

"It creates a nice transition and makes it easier for teaching staff to cover both areas. It turned out nice and we are happy with the job they did," said Unit 1

Superintendent Chris Spencer.

A week later, Board members approved a \$95,759.01 bid from Stray Dog Strength to redo the flooring, including a patch of turf that will be used for training purposes.

Stray Dog Strength was one of four bidders with their

SEE SCHOOL, PAGE 2



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Police activity increases in March

The Coal City Police Department continues to see an increase in total calls for service in the month of March at 638, an increase of 32% from the same month one year ago.

Total activity, a combination of calls for service and officer-initiated, was up 23 calls from the prior month. To date, officers have logged 1,779 calls with 723 requiring a report.

In his monthly report to the Village Board, Chief Chris Harseim expects the increase in call volume will continue through the summer.

Officers filed 19 criminal charges and handed out 38 citations, both down from the prior month. And, the chief reported there were six traffic crashes investigated in March.

As for activity involving the county's ProAct Unit, Harseim said there were nine felony and nine misdemeanor arrests, as well as drug and firearm seizures.

He added, the unit is conducting tobacco compliance checks throughout the county and in its first outing found four of five tobacco sellers in the village of Diamond were found in violation of selling to individuals under the age of 21.

Spring cleanup set for Coal City

The village of Coal City's annual spring cleanup day is just one month away.

The village of Coal City and Environmental Waste Recycling has announced the curb side collection—the only one held this year—is scheduled for May 18 and 19, depending on your waste collection day.

There are a few items that that will not be collected and that includes broken concrete, building materials, rocks, soil, household hazardous waste including but not limited to—explosives, paints, oils, solvents or other materials that may present a fire hazard.

Other items not allowed include medical and biohazard wastes, construction and or demolition materials including drywall, lumber, roofing materials, fencing and posts, permanent swimming pools and or materials resulting from fires, floods or evictions.

Items that can be disposed of during the spring cleanup is a white item and tire pickup. A maximum of four tires—no rims. White items are anything that heats or cools such as refrigerators, stoves, air conditioning units and even washers and dryers.

The white item and tire collection will also be a curb-side collection.

Mattresses, box springs, sofas, furniture and furnishings can be put at the curb for collection.

An electronics pickup is also scheduled for these days and must be pre-scheduled at least 24 hours in advance by calling 815-725-4555. There will be a \$35 charge for every television or monitor collected.

The waste hauler asks that all items be placed at the curb by 6 a.m. on the day of scheduled pickup.

Legislators share good news at annual breakfast

State legislators and community leaders convened and filled the house at the annual Grundy Economic Development Council (GEDC) Legislative Breakfast.

GEDC Chairman Pete Brummel and Nancy Norton, the agency's president and CEO, welcomed the nearly 170 guests to the event that featured remarks from Illinois Senators Tom Bennett and Sue Rezin and Representatives Jason Bunting and Jed Davis.

The legislators discussion business issues affecting Grundy County and the state of Illinois during the April 13 event at the Morris Country Club.

The Legislative Breakfast started off with some great news about Illinois.

- In less than two years, Moody's Investor Services has upgraded Illinois' credit rating eight times.
- Illinois has paid down its backlog of bills from a high of \$16.7 billion during the budget impasse to an accounts payable today of \$2.4 billion.
- State vendors used to wait up to 210 business days to get paid. Today the oldest general funds bill in the comptroller's office is 17 days old.
- Illinois is the only state with all seven Class One railroads.
- Illinois has the third largest interstate system in the US.



THE GRUNDY COUNTY Economic Development Council [GEDC] hosted its annual Legislative Breakfast on Thursday, April 13. The event, held at Morris Country Club, included remarks from [left to right]: Representatives Jason Bunting and Jed Davis and Senators Sue Rezin and Tom Bennett.

The University of Illinois graduates more engineers each year than Stanford, Massachusetts Institute of Technology [MIT] and California Institute of Technology [Caltech] combined.

Other topics that were discussed included the recent bill sponsored by Senator Rezin that lifts a moratorium on building new nuclear plants in Illinois. That bill passed the Senate and now goes to the House for consideration.

The crowd also learned about legislation to address the teacher shortage in Illinois and the unemployment insurance fund.

Norton moderated the event and commented, "This has been one of the largest crowds we've ever had. It is so important that our legislators

hear from the business community about issues of importance, and in turn, participants can hear firsthand what is happening in Springfield. I am grateful for the hard work and commitment demonstrated by our legislators and appreciate their willingness to listen and support our local businesses. It is an important, valued partnership."

Young Philanthropists to award \$20,000 to local non-profits

Young philanthropists from across Grundy County will join the Community Foundation of Grundy County in awarding \$20,000 to non-profit organizations.

The community is invited to attend the Young Philanthropists Grant Award

Night on Thursday, May 11. At that time, the Young Philanthropist groups from Coal City, Gardner-South Wilmington, Morris and Seneca high school's will hand out funds to various groups the students care about.

Each school group is allotted \$5,000 to distribute to organizations of their choos-

ing and in an amount they determine would best assist the non-profit carry out its work.

The grant recipients are not know until the awards night when the students announce their selections.

The May 11 event will be held at the Morris Country Club, 2615 Route 6, Morris

from 5-7 p.m.

No tickets are needed to attend the event and participation is free due to the generous sponsorship of BDF LLC., however registration is required and can be made by calling the community foundation 815-941-0852 or e-mailing julie@cfgrundycountry.com.

Budget

takes into account the expense of training new staff.

Coal City's budget includes capital improvements to the water treatment plant that is being financed by an Illinois Environmental Protection Agency [IEPA] grant that is backed by a surcharge collected through the bi-monthly utility billing.

Additional projects in the coming fiscal year include the town's participation in Grundy County's Master Transportation Plan, finalization of phase 2 engineering for the North Broadway reconstruction, phase one engineering for Reed Road extending west from Broadway to Gorman Road and planning for the fiscal year 2025 resurfacing of Carbon Hill Road from Division Street [Route 113] to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail crossing.

The fiscal year 2024 budget begins Monday, May 1.

Winke is top speller in IVC conference

Coal City Middle School was represented during the Illinois Valley Conference Spelling Bee by three students—Max Christensen, Brady Pierson and Delanie Winke, who was the conference champion.

Winke was also crowned the top eighth grade speller in the contest that was held in Seneca.

Christensen took first place among sixth graders and Pierson finished third among seventh grade spellers.

Jen Munsterman and Tara Sweeney serve as the school's spelling bee sponsors.

No injuries reported in Braidwood fire

STAFF REPORT

No one was injured when fire swept through a Braidwood home last week.

On Wednesday, April 12, around 7:42 p.m., the Braidwood Fire Protection District responded to a structure fire at 163 S. School St., across from Reed-Custer Elementary School.

According to a release issued by the department, fire personnel discovered a single story residence with heavy smoke and visible fire from the back of the structure when they arrived at the scene.

Firefighters made entry into the home and

discovered the fire had progressed into the attic. Firefighters were able to get the fire under control and extinguished.

The two occupants of the home were assessed by ambulance crews but were not transported to the hospital, and there were no injuries reported from the fire.

The cause of the fire is under investigation by the Braidwood Fire Protection District and the MABAS Division 15 Fire Investigative Scene.

Braidwood Fire was assisted on the scene by the fire protection districts of Wilmington, Coal City, Troy, Channahon, Morris, Custer, Braceville, Gardner, Braidwood ESDA, Braidwood Police, and MABAS 15.

FBLA

Kennell, introduction to event planning, and Wyleigh Serena, introduction to event planning.

The 12 delegates from the Coal City High School participated in the two-day event that included business and leadership training workshops and seminars, and election of area officers.

FBLA is the largest and oldest business student organization in the world. Its members, belonging to more than 6,000 chartered chapters, include students from the United States, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Europe.

Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) is the high school division and Phi Beta Lambda (PBL) is designed for post-secondary and college students.

School

and expand for much needed instructional space.

"It was nice to come back after spring break and see those rooms," Spencer said.

At its meeting on April 12, the Board also approved a \$284,405 bid from Tiles in Style to complete tile work at the middle school.

The work, Spencer said, will fix moisture issues in the flooring in some portions of the building.

The superintendent said architects are putting together cost estimates and timelines for other projects.

A financial review of projected costs and funding sources is also expected in the coming months.

Class of 2003 save the date

The Coal City High School class of 2003 graduates are should save the date for its upcoming 20-year class reunion.

Organizers are planning to reconnect on Saturday, Sept. 30 at the Goose Lake Hall, 3935 Goose Lake Rd., Morris.

Additional details will be sent out to graduates, however questions regarding the event can be directed to Angela Murrell at 815-922-0927 or by e-mail to coalcityhs2003reunion@gmail.com.

Community Foundation offers non-profit wish list

The Community Foundation of Grundy County is offering a new service to support local non-profit organizations and units of government.

Through its non-profit wish list, the Community Foundation will accept donations and forward them on to the organization at the beginning of each month.

Donors can support one or more organizations or agencies. The items seeking funding can include assistance with utility bills, purchasing new equipment or even constructing new buildings or adding staff.

Non-profits interested in being a part of this new program can sign up via the Community Foundation's website at cfgrundycountry.fcbsite.com/erp/donate/request.

Those looking to assist these non-profits can log on to cfgrundycountry.com to make a donation. Links to several non-profits and agencies are already listed.

Drive-up pork dinner May 6 at CCUMC

The Coal City United Methodist Church invites the community to their Drive-Up Pork Chop Dinner on Saturday, May 6, from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Each dinner will include: a pork chop, cheesy potatoes, baked beans, coleslaw and

dinner roll. All meals will be packed in carry-out containers to take home and enjoy. The cost is \$15 per meal.

All proceeds will go to the Coal City United Methodist Church Building Fund. Only 125 meals will be available, so stop by early.

COAL CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY NEWS

Check online event calendar at ccpld.org for a description of the events and to register.

Check out our digital services available 24/7 on our website at www.ccpld.org.

In-Person Adult Exercise, Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays 9-10 a.m.

Library Road Trip – Saturday, March 25 thru Sunday, April 30 visit participating libraries, 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.

Read Away Your Fines - For the month of April all CCPLD library cardholders will have the opportunity to "Read Away Your Fines." Come to the front desk with CCPLD reading material and sit in the library and read. For every 15 minutes you read (must be in the library) we will remove \$1 from your current fines only (does not apply to future fines). This does not cover damaged or unreturned library materials. Take advantage of this opportunity to clear your fines.

Thursday, April 20-AARP Smart Driver Course, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 2nd day of course.

Terrific Tots, 10 a.m.

We Remember, 1 p.m.

Terrific Tots, 6 p.m.

Cooking with Heather Shouse, sandwiches, 6-8 p.m.

Friday, April 21- Play Days, 10

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Gas price climbing

You'd be hard-pressed to find a gallon of gasoline for less than \$4/g locally, as prices shot up 12 cents on average over the past week.

Prices in Illinois are 43.8 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 29.0 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have risen 11.2 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$4.06/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

"With oil prices touching their highest level of 2023 at nearly \$83 per barrel, the national average price of gasoline has continued to inch higher, with 45 of the nation's 50 states seeing prices rise over the last week. While the rising price of oil is likely the largest factor in rising gas prices, seasonal impacts continue to also exert pressure on prices," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

Wilmington area stations ranged from \$4.09/g to \$4.01/g on Monday. In Braidwood the

price was \$3.99/g, to \$4.15/g while in Coal City stations were charging anywhere from \$3.87/g to \$4.09/g.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Illinois was priced at \$3.49/g near Champaign while the most expensive was \$4.99/g, in Chicago, a difference of \$1.50/g.

"With the Northeast making the final step in the transition to summer gasoline this week, states in that region should expect a sharp rise in gasoline prices over the next week or two. Every other region has already seen the final step in the transition occur, so while other areas will see prices continue to slowly rise, the Northeast is likely to see a pretty hefty jump of 15-40 cents per gallon soon. Oil prices remain a wildcard, but we're likely a few weeks away from seeing the national average peak. Whether it hits \$4 per gallon or not is still perhaps a 50/50 chance."

The national average is up 22.1 cents per gallon from a month ago.

Bobcat numbers increasing in Illinois

BY ZETA CROSS
THE CENTER SQUARE

The bobcat population in Illinois seems to be growing. No one knows for sure, says Jennifer Kuroda, founder of the Illinois Bobcat Foundation.

A lifelong resident of Rockford, Kuroda said she's never seen one when she has been out hiking. Bobcats don't want to be around people, she said.

"Bobcats are very reclusive. It is easy to walk right by one. They are very reluctant to reveal themselves," Kuroda said.

Kuroda blames the media for making people afraid of bobcats.

"On the news, they escalate the dangers of bobcats. A hundred percent of the attacks are from bobcats that have rabies," Kuroda said. "A fox or a raccoon or any rabid animal is going to come after you."

Bobcats won't hurt children or pets. They might eat a backyard chicken, but they prefer voles and other rodents.

"Bobcats are excellent for natural rodent control," she said. "Bobcats are not very big. The biggest ones are twice the size of a housecat"

A big male lucky enough to live in a habitat with plenty of rodents to eat can weigh up to 40 pounds, she said. But many bobcats are much smaller. Last year when Kuroda was out with a naturalist, they colared a full-grown female that only weighed 14 pounds.



Courtesy Forest Preserve District of Will County
A FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT of Will County game camera photographed bobcats, possibly a mother and her kittens, walking in a small open area at Kankakee Sands Preserve in Custer Township in October 2020.

legislature made bobcat hunting and trapping legal again. In 2022, people went online to buy \$5 pelt permits for 367 bobcat kills. Fifty-two percent of the bobcats were killed by hunters. The rest were trapped or killed on the roads.

Two years ago Forest Preserve District of Will County game cameras captured photos of bobcats, possibly a mother and her kittens, walking through a small open area in Kankakee Sands Preserve in Custer Township. One was also found as road kill in Essex Township and two different motorists have reported seeing one while driving near Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie north of Wilmington.

Bobcats have been spotted in the Chicago suburbs recently, Kuroda said.

"The forest preserves there are so well connected that it is not surprising that bobcats are moving through there, or even denning," she said.

People who really want to see a bobcat in the wild are much more likely to see one in southern Illinois, Kuroda said. Bobcats like the habitat of the Shawnee National Forest. Dawn or dusk are the best times to spot one, she said. For an even better chance to see one, take a trip to Kiawah Island, South Carolina. About 30 bobcats live on the island and the residents love them, Kuroda said.

"They see them out on the golf course," she said.

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BY KEVIN BESSLER
THE CENTER SQUARE

Federal regulators have proposed a rule that would permit year-round sales of E10 gasoline in Illinois and seven other Midwest states, opening the door for expanded use of E15.

Last year, the governors of the eight states petitioned the federal government with a request to opt out of the regulatory waiver that allows for regular E10 gasoline to be sold during summer months.

The governors tied their request to a provision under the Clean Air Act, giving the Environmental Protection Agency 90 days to formally respond and implement the change by July 2022, a deadline that was missed.

Officials said removing the waiver would allow E15 and E10 to be made using the same gasoline blend stock, and would help expand the availability year round of E15 in multiple jurisdictions.

Illinois corn farmers and the ethanol industry are also concerned the year delay will have an impact on market certainty and request action be taken to ensure E15 remains an option in this summer's fuel market.

"An emergency waiver for summer E15 would give consumers the option of lower cost fuel during the warmer months," Illinois Corn Growers Association President Matt Rush said in a statement.

Patrick Kelly, senior director of Fuel & Vehicle Policy with the American Fuels and Petrochemicals Manufacturers, said

there are additional costs to produce, store and distribute a so-called "boutique" Midwestern gasoline.

"The total incremental cost to supply this new boutique gasoline ranges from \$500 million to \$800 million each year, and a disruption could push costs to \$1.1 billion," Kelly testified to the EPA.

Kelly said the Midwest would rely more heavily on supply from Gulf Coast refineries and would be cut off from receiving available supplies from neighboring states. In the event of a hurricane, or other extreme circumstance, gasoline shortages in the Midwest could be more frequent.

The EPA enforces summertime regulations preventing ethanol blends to be sold because of concerns of smog.

WHS Class of '80 planning reunion

Save the date as the Wilmington High School Class of '80 Reunion will take place June 24, at the Holiday Inn & Suites at 1471 Rock Creek Blvd., Joliet. It will start at 4:30 p.m. and end at 11 p.m.

Admissions will be \$65 for single and \$125 for couple.

Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. and there will be a DJ and cash bar.

If you have any questions call Lyn Reese-Allot at (815) 999-2121 or email LREESE1962@yahoo.com or contact Dawn Hansen-Norris at dawnnorris@comcast.net.

Letter to the editor Alcohol Awareness Month a reminder alcohol is not safe

Dear Editor:

"Wine promises one thing - delivers another", a quote from a recovering alcoholic. "No matter what problem you're trying to mask or fix.....alcohol will always ensure you end up with more of what you don't want."

Ethanol, the alcohol that is in all alcoholic beverages and which is burned in engines, is a toxic poison to the body. The wine industry did a smart move, financially on their part, when it "married" the health industry several years ago.

April's Alcohol Awareness Month is a good time to be reminded that by volume there is more ethyl alcohol in wine than in beer.

To explain, each average serving of the following contain the same amount of alcohol,

1/2 ounce: 1-2 oz cocktail; 3-5 oz. wine; 12 oz. beer; 12 oz. wine cooler. No alcoholic drink is safe.

According to researchers, such as Samuele Bacchiocchi and David R. Brumbelow, the word "wine" in the Bible is a generic word that has several meanings such as fresh grape juice, molasses, raisins, and fermented alcoholic wine. The meaning of the word must be determined by the context of the scripture.

There is one verse that speaks clearly and is easy to understand from Proverbs 20:1: "Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is deceived by them is not wise."

Mrs. Loreta Jent, Education Director National Woman's Christian Temperance Union Normal, IL

Take a hike with photo expert

The Forest Preserve will be hosting a new program "Photography Bird Hike" on Saturday, May 13, at the Four Rivers Environmental Education Center, Channahon. It will be from 8:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. Kick off Migration

Celebration with a guided photography hike along the best birding trails Four Rivers has to offer. Get tips from an expert photographer on how to capture your favorite birds. Bring your camera and take advantage of the busiest time of the year! Free, all ages.

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 brennej@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

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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

Women of Wilmington use only

(do not write in these spaces)

Postmark: _____ Amount Received: _____

Check #: _____

Five eaglets hatch in two Forest Preserve District of Will County nests

Five eaglets have hatched in two Forest Preserve District of Will County nests this spring, continuing a trend of rebounding eagle numbers in the region over the past decade.

Three eaglets were spotted on April 4 in one nest and two hatchlings were confirmed in a second nest on April 14.

The eagle parents are busily feeding their fuzzy-headed chicks, which was caught on Facebook.com/WillCoForest and YouTube.com/WillCoForests.

Joel Craig, a volunteer eagle monitor for the Forest Preserve, said it's exciting to see the hatchlings, especially the trio in one nest.

This is the second time in three years that this nest has produced three eaglets.

"Seeing the next generation of bald eagles locally makes me extremely happy – and in a sense, relieved," said Craig, who is a member of the Will County Audubon. "You never know how inclement weather might affect the nests from the time the eggs are laid through the first few weeks in the lives of the eaglets."

Eagle nests are huge, generally measuring 4 feet to 5 feet wide and 2 feet to 4 feet deep.

They are used year after year and require some maintenance prior to each nesting season. Eagles will usually keep building on the nest until it gets too big, and it collapses or the weight of it breaks the tree. Then they'll find a new location and build another one.

The eagle baby boom shows that the



Courtesy photo by Chad Merda

TWO EAGLE NESTS located in the Forest Preserve District of Will County have produced five eaglets this spring. The hatchlings are a good sign that a rebound of eagles in the area is continuing.

species is finding Will County a hospitable place to nest, Craig added.

"The way resources are managed within

the Forest Preserve District is having an overwhelmingly positive impact on the ecosystems in which these preserves exist," he said.

"This is not only good for the environment, but it's also a very visible return on the investment of Will County taxpayers and the financial resources with which the Forest Preserve is entrusted."

Craig said that an increasing number of immature bald eagles in the winter indicates the ones we're seeing now are residents and not migrants.

It's also evidence that Will County has good, clean water and a healthy fish population to support them year-round.

"To see eagles rebound like they have in this area in the past 10 years has been pretty exciting," Craig said. "To be threatened and endangered when I was a kid to what we're seeing now, it's really a population explosion in our area over the past few years."

Eagles and their nests are federally protected, and human interference could cause the birds to abandon the nest and their eggs. The National Audubon Society recommends being at least 330 feet away from a nest.

That's about the length of a football field. To protect these birds, the Forest Preserve never publicly disclose nesting locations. If you should come across a nest, be sure to keep your distance.

For more information on the Forest Preserve District of Will County, visit ReconnectWithNature.org.

Analysis: State spending will soon begin outpacing revenues once again

BY JERRY NOWICKI
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD – While Illinois has recently experienced a prolonged stretch of good financial news, a new state fiscal forecast notes that if spending continues to grow at its recent pace it could lead to future budget deficits.

It would mark the reversal of a recent trend during which the state logged considerable surpluses this fiscal year and the two years prior.

In the highest-spending scenario outlined in the three-year forecast from the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability, the state could once again face a bill backlog as high as \$18 billion. That estimate assumes spending growth at its five-year average of 7.1%.

"This example shows that spending patterns seen in the past few years cannot continue without a comparable increase in revenues which is not seen in the commission's current estimates," the report from the legislature's nonpartisan forecasting commission noted.

If the state keeps spending growth at 1.8% – the most austere scenario outlined by the commission – it could maintain an accounts payable balance of \$1.4 billion, the same as it was at the end of Fiscal Year 2022.

Even in that scenario, state spending would outpace revenues in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2024 that begins July 1 – although Gov. JB Pritzker has proposed decreasing state spending in FY 24.

His \$49.6 billion proposed spending plan for FY 24 represents a 0.7% decrease from the baseline number assumed in the COGFA forecast. Lawmakers, however, are still working on crafting a final budget before their May 19 adjournment.

"We have to pass a balanced budget...Illinois has

had a past where, you know, for a few years anyway, that didn't happen," Pritzker said at a news conference last week. "... And I think the General Assembly has taken that very seriously."

While the new report illustrated that lawmakers may have to tighten their belts in the coming years, it remained consistent with previous projections by the commission and other forecasters that have suggested an economic slowdown is on the horizon.

The COGFA report noted that over the past five years, state revenues have grown at a rate of 12% on average, compared to the 7.1% average expenditure growth.

Pandemic-era federal stimulus funds have mostly dried up, however, and their effect on the nation's economy is beginning to wane. Many economic forecasts anticipate a mild recession is on its way.

The slowdown was evidenced in COGFA's March revenue update that was published this week, showing that revenues declined \$563 million from the same month last year. It marked the first year-over-year decline for any month this year, but COGFA noted the drop was expected after a record March 2022.

In other words, revenue growth rates of 18% and 12% that were seen in fiscal years 2021 and 2022 are not likely to be repeated anytime soon.

COGFA anticipates revenues will shrink by 1.4% to \$50.4 billion in the upcoming FY 24 and remain under current-year levels until FY 2026, when they jump 2.5% to \$52.2 billion.

As for spending, one important caveat is that the growth of the past two years been at least partially driven by measures that COGFA described as "fiscal discipline." That includes debt retirement, increased pension payments and long-term savings.

It has also included temporary tax relief and other

one-time expenditures that won't carry over from one fiscal year to the next.

But spending across human services, education and other agencies has also that very seriously."

"Current forecasts would allow for more of this kind of spending in the short-term," COGFA wrote in the report. "However, longer-term, economic and tax revenue forecasts remain murky for the potential for a recession remains."

The three-year report also analyzed threats to the state's fiscal position, including the potential recession, a COVID-19 resurgence, population loss and pension debt among others.

Many of the threats, the report noted, "can be directly linked" to "a long-term trend of having expenditures being higher than revenues." It also noted that "work still remains" for the state to achieve a "budgetary system that is more stable in the long-term."

"An opportunity exists to improve the state's financial situation by better aligning the revenues and expenditures of the state. This can be done by raising revenues, cutting spending, or some combination of both," the report noted.

Illinois could also achieve stability by broadening its sales tax to include more services.

"The Illinois sales tax was originally developed in the 1930s when the economy was much more reliant on goods production," the report noted. "By taxing services, the tax system would modernize to more accurately reflect the economy of 2023."

The revenues resulting from a service tax could be used to offset a portion of the sales tax on goods and "allow for the overall tax rate to be lowered," according to the report.

The state could also save money by reducing statutory interest payments on overdue bills and using current-year

surpluses for "paying down debt, investing for future growth, reducing taxes, and/or returning money to taxpayers."

But on the whole, the report noted, "After the budget stalemate that occurred from 2015-2017, the state's financial position has been getting better each year."

That two-year impasse between Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner and Democrats in the General Assembly drove the state's bill backlog to nearly \$17 billion and caused crippling cuts across state agencies.

The report's final piece of advice: "The State needs to continue to show fiscal discipline and demonstrate that the results of the past few years are not an anomaly."

Decluttering Our Hearts & Home at the Wilmington Library

The Wilmington Public Library will host professional organizer Jennifer Barnes for a presentation titled "Decluttering Our Hearts and Homes: The Emotional Connection to Stuff" on Wednesday, April 26, at 6 p.m.


This presentation will focus on the why and how behind our emotional connection to things and provide motivation to declutter the spaces in which we live and work.

To register, stop by the library, 201 S. Kankakee St., or call 815-476-2834. All are welcome, we do not limit our programming to Wilmington cardholders.

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Many positives to buying refurbished electronics

Dear EarthTalk: Is buying refurbished electronics better for the planet than buying brand new ones?

-- Peter Behr, Chicago, IL

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the world produces some 50 million tons of electronic waste each year, and the figure is increasing. Meanwhile, only 20 percent of this electronic waste is disposed of properly.

The remaining 80 percent is either sent to landfills, incinerated or illegally traded, resulting in a host of environmental problems including groundwater pollution, reduced air quality and the depletion of virgin natural resources to replace discarded items. As a result, buying refurbished electronics is a step in the right direction.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that buying refurbished electronics can significantly reduce the environmental impact of electronic waste.

The EPA estimates that for every million smartphones that are refurbished and reused, approximately 35,000 pounds of copper, 772 pounds of silver, 75 pounds of gold and 33 pounds of palladium can be recovered.

This is a considerable number of valuable resources that can be conserved by buying refurbished electronics.

Refurbishing electronics not only conserve resources but also helps reduce green-

EARTH TALK

Questions & Answers About Our Environment

house gas emissions by as much as 50 percent, according to the EPA.

This is because the production of new electronics requires a lot of energy, and greenhouse gas emissions are generated during the manufacturing process.

"Most of the pollution that's made actually is in the manufacturing of the device, not the use," says Lucas Guterman of the non-profit public interest group, U.S. PIRG. "So buying refurbished and using things for as long as we possibly can, really helps protect the environment."

Buying refurbished is also good for the pocketbook, given that they cost less. But is the savings worth it? Refurbished items sold by reputable retailers undergo tests and inspections to ensure that they meet the same quality standards as new items.

According to the Consumer Technology Association (CTA), a trade association for the consumer electronics industry, buyers should look for refurbished electronics that come with a warranty that assures that the



GIVEN THE buildup of e-waste these days, environmentalists are increasingly looking at refurbished items when shopping for new electronics.

item has been thoroughly vetted and is of high quality.

"Some credit card companies will extend coverage on refurbished goods, too, as long as they come with a preexisting warranty," notes Consumer Reports' Yael Grauer. Another smart consumer tip is to always check the return policy on a refurbished item before hitting the "buy" button.

"It might take you a little while to notice poor performance and defects in a refurbished product, so it helps to have at least one month to decide whether you want to keep it," adds Grauer.

Apple, Dell, Amazon, Walmart and BestBuy are among the large companies that sell many refurbished electronics with limited war-

ranties and a return policy.

Dozens of other smaller resellers (e.g., Refurb.io, TechForLess, Gazelle, RefurbMe, etc.) also specialize in refurbished products and typically offer similar if not better terms for consumers.

"Buying refurbished products positively impacts the environment by boosting the circular economy, lowering the replacement cycle, reducing carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions, avoiding additional e-waste, and reducing energy and fuel consumption," says Simo Elalj of RefurbMe. "You do this by giving a new life to a pre-owned device."

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

Will County Recorder warns against costly veteran services

Will County veterans should avoid dealing with companies wanting to charge a fee for submitting their military discharge papers (DD-214) for recording or provide copies of their military discharge papers.

"These services are provided at no cost to the veteran in my office," Will County Recorder, Karen A. Stukel stated. The company that has recently submitted documents for recording is DD214 Direct based out of Phoenix, AZ and the fees charged are \$79 and above. This company is offering a paid service to veterans that is free at County recording offices throughout the State.

Recorder Stukel encourages veterans to record their military discharge papers with her office so that they are

always safe and available to obtain a copy, should they need one, at no cost.

"Once recorded, to show our appreciation, the veteran can sign up for our Honor Rewards program. This program partners with area businesses to offer discounts to our brave servicemen and servicewomen."

Veterans should be mindful of the services that businesses/organizations may charge for, especially when they may be offered at no cost by a governmental office or organization. If a veteran has any questions or concerns, they should reach out to their local Veterans Assistance Commission, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs at (800) 698-2411 or the Will County Recorder's office at (815) 740-4637.

Taxed out: Americans pay \$78 billion in gas taxes

Taxes on gasoline amount to \$215 million daily

While Americans raced to file their taxes ahead of the deadline, Tax Day is every day for U.S. drivers.

Gas prices have been rising over the past several weeks as Americans get back on the road and gear up for summer road trips - but there are some hidden costs buried in what Americans pay for gasoline that are driving up prices even

more for many motorists around the country.

Every day, Americans spend \$215 million on federal, state and local taxes on gasoline, with some states having lower taxes, and some having higher taxes. Some states also benefit from higher gasoline prices, with percentage-based sales taxes applied, helping the state to capture additional revenue when motorists are already getting hit with higher gas prices.

"While most Americans blame oil companies or gas stations for the high price of

gasoline, few remember or are reminded by the portion Uncle Sam takes at the gas pump: 18.4 cents on every gallon, but most states take even more than that, and most never disclose at the pump how much tax is charged per gallon, making motorists target gas stations or oil companies instead of disclosing they are charging an average of 38.7 cents on every gallon," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

California ranks the highest with 86.55 cents per gallon. Illinois is second at 78 cents/g.

Alaska is lowest at 33.5c/g while in Missouri, a neighbor to Illinois, gas tax is 38.3c/gal.

No wonder Illinoisans cross the Mississippi River to fill up.

"Some states pinch motorists even more by having a percentage-based sales tax on gasoline, so that when gas prices rise, their coffers are filled at a faster pace. When gas prices hit a record last year, states saw money rolling in around the clock, more than ever before in some states."

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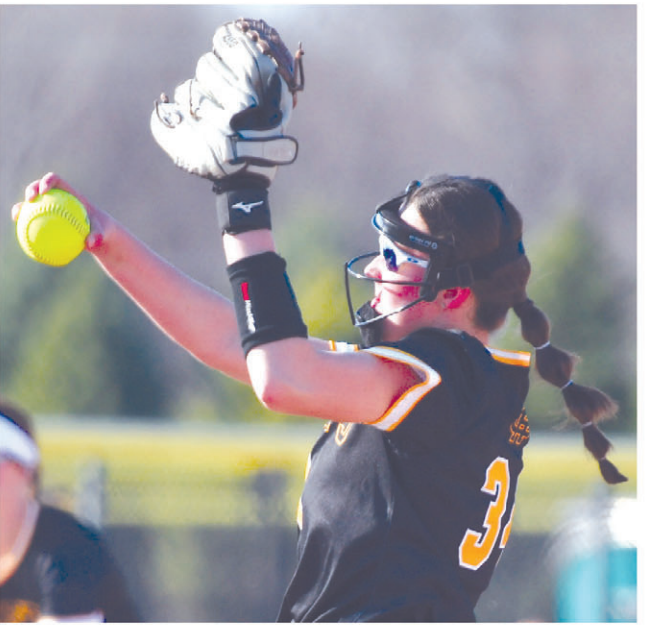
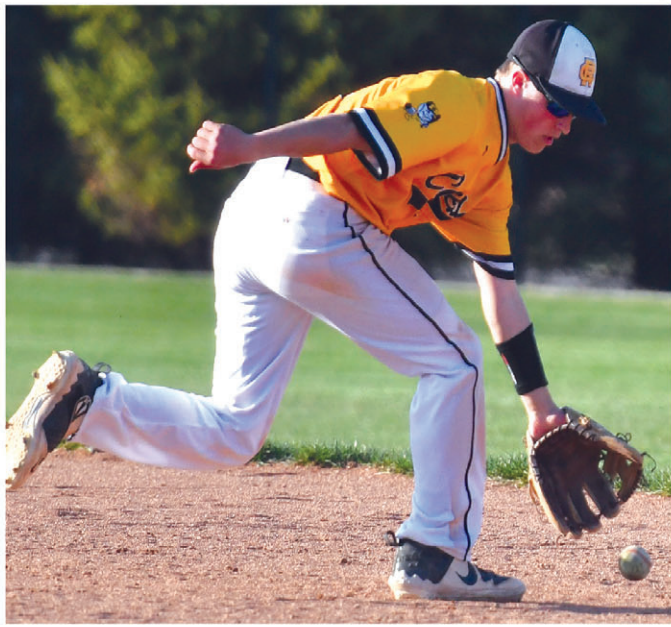
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COALER SPORTS



Photo by Amy Walker

TAKING A CUT at the plate for the Lady Coalers last week is center fielder Mia Ferrias.



Photo by Amy Walker

THROW IN TIME—Lady Coaler second baseman Makenzie Henline raises her glove in the air signaling the force out following a pop-up at second base on the Manteno runner. Also waiting for the call is Mia Ferrias (5).

Lady Coalers tackle Tuscola

The Lady Coaler softball team brought home some hardware from the Tuscola tournament over the weekend, winning the third place trophy.

Coal City beat Arthur 7-5 for starters before falling to Marshall 7-2. They battled Camp Point to decide third place, winning 11-4.

Masyn Kuder earned two wins on the mound and Kerrigan Copes led the way offensively. Lady Coalers end their win streak at 12 games. Their overall record is 16-3 as they remain undefeated 6-0 in conference.

Monday's game against Streator was rescheduled for today (Wednesday). They'll have a break until Monday when they travel to Herscher.

Combes throws no-hitter
Coal City shutout Kankakee High School 10-0 on Thursday, thanks to some excellent fielding to back up an impressive pitching performance by Bri Combes. Combes threw a no hitter as she walked only one and struck out none during five innings. Combes also went 2-for-3 at bat, ending up with two RBIs.

Coal City came out swinging with 14 hits including six doubles as they ran the bases well and took advantage of three Kankakee errors.

Leading the Lady Coalers in hitting was Kerigan Copes going 3-for-3 with an RBI. Makayla Henline was happy hitting two doubles and scoring two runs. Makenzie Henline, Khloe Picard, Jady Shaw and A. Harvey all registered dou-

bles.

Walk-off win

The Lady Coalers broke a 1-1 against Manteno on Tuesday to win 2-1 in the bottom of the 7th, thanks to a line shot to the centerfield fence by Abby Gagliardo to score Khloe Picard.

Masyn Kuder went the distance on the mound allowing only one run and picking up her 11th win of the season.

"Tonight marks the 10th win in a row for us and I'm proud of how we have competed this year," said coach Rodney Monbrum.

Recording hits for Coal City were the Henline sisters, Kerigan Copes and Picard. The Lady Coalers committed four errors while Manteno had two.



Photo by Amy Walker
MAKING THE STOP with a diving grab at short-stop is Coal City's Makayla Henline.



Photo by Amy Walker

TARGETING A STRIKE for Coal City pitcher Masyn Kuder last week is catcher Khloe Picard.

Micetich to lead Coaler boys basketball

STAFF REPORT

Joe Micetich has been named new head coach of the Coal City High School varsity

boys basketball team.

Micetich's appointment was announced last week following the Unit 1 Board of Education's approval. He suc-

ceeds Tyler Schoonover who is leaving the district after one year of teaching and coaching.

Micetich previously served as the Coaler's sophomore coach and was a two-year junior varsity coach at Dwight High School before joining the CCHS staff as a math teacher in the 2019.

Harlan Kennell will assist Micetich, a position being vacated by Seth Schoonover.

Kennell, a business education teacher at the high school, was the seventh grade basketball coach at the middle school.

At its meeting last week, the Board also took action on a recommendation from athletic director Dan Hutchings to name Michael Kostbade as the district's first head middle school soccer coach. He currently serves as an assistant for the high school girls soccer team.

Sarah Cyrkiel has been named his assistant coach for the 2023 season.

Earlier this year, the Board agreed to pilot a middle school program for students in grades six to eight.

The soccer program will be financially supported by the Coal City Soccer League for the next three years.

Board members also approved Emily Halliday as an assistant high school track coach and accepted the extra-curricular resignations of Lauren Basham, sixth grade softball coach; Stephanie

Vuscko, seventh grade softball coach; and Branden Peterson, head middle school wrestling coach.



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Photo by Amy Walker

SPEEDING TO THE BALL for Coal City during their loss to Herscher is senior middle Cara Planeta.



Photo by Amy Walker

CHASING THE BALL for the Coal City soccer team last week is Aubrey Mellen.



Photo by Eric Fisher

COAL CITY SENIOR Kaelan Natyshok fires up his teammates during a recent game.

Lady Coalers suffer pair of losses

There was no easy going last week for the Coal City girls soccer team who fell to two tough foes.

Coal City lost 1-0 to Lisle on Thursday. Lady Coaler keeper Chloe Plueger had 13 saves and keeper Alaina Morales had two. Their overall record is 4-3-1, conference 1-2.

Earlier in the week Herscher showed why they're ranked at the top of the conference with Peotone during a 6-1 loss. The lone goal for Coal City was scored by Cara Planeta. Keeper Chloe Plueger had 15 saves.

The Lady Coalers travel to Peotone Thursday then will host the Lady Coaler Shootout Saturday.



Photo by Amy Walker

TWO ARE BETTER than one when it comes to defending the field. Lady Coalers are Cassidy Jenke (23) and Audrey Cooper (21).



Photo by Amy Walker

BLOCKING OUT the Herscher forward is Coal City's Kylee Kennel.



Photo by Amy Walker

GETTING TO THE BALL for a block with her body is Coal City's Kim Perez.

Photo by Amy Walker

PUTTING UP at fight for the ball against Herscher last week is Coal City's Audrey Cooper (21).

Late hitting hurts the Coalers

The Coal City varsity baseball team stayed within striking distance of the Morris Redskins through most of the game Saturday before pulling away late in a 10-3 victory.

Morris trailed 2-1 in the top of the fifth inning when AJ Zweeres doubled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring three runs.

The Coalers struggled to contain the high-powered offense of Morris, giving up 10 runs. Coal City fired up the offense in the first inning, when Braiden Young doubled to score two runs.

The Coalers was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Cason Headley made the most plays with six.

Cade Baldauf went 3-for-4 at the plate to lead Coal City.

At Slammers Stadium

The Coalers defeated Newark Norsemen on Thursday as they got to play at the Slammers home field in Joliet.

Coal City tallied four runs in the first inning. Nolan Eddy had an RBI double in the inning to lead the run scoring. Coal City got their offense started when Luke Nolan lined out, driving in a run.

Caden Kuder got the win for Coal City. The lefty lasted 2.1 innings, allowing one hit and no runs while striking out five and walking one.

Joe Watson and Austin Davy entered the game out of the bullpen and helped to close out the game in relief.

Braiden Young, Carter Garrelts, Eddy, Cade Baldauf, and Nolan Ness each collected one hit for Coal City.

Tuesday Thriller

Coal City took their game in dramatic walk-off fashion in Tuesday, thanks to a walk-off single to topple Manteno 2-1.

The game was tied 1-1 with Coal City batting in the bottom of the seventh when Braden Reilly singled on a 1-0 count, scoring one run.

The pitching was strong on both sides. Reilly struck out two, while Ben Carlile shut down 12. Coal City got on the board in the second inning when Reilly was hit by a pitch, driving in a run.

In the top of the sixth inning, the Panthers tied things up at one when an error scored one run for Manteno.

Reilly earned the win for Coal City. The pitcher went seven innings, allowing one run off seven hits, striking out two and walking one.

Tanner Wallace went 2-for-3 at the plate to lead the Coalers in hits. Also collecting hits were Baldauf, Jim Feeney and Eddy.

The Coalers, 7-6 overall, will get a few days rest as their next game is Monday at Herscher.

Coalers participating in spring sports

STAFF REPORT

Over 26% of Coal City High School's student body is participating in a spring sport.

In his monthly report to the Board of Education, athletic director Dan Hutchings reported 162 students are playing a sport, the largest turnout being for boys baseball.

There are 38 students playing baseball this season with 10 seniors, 12 juniors, five sophomores and 11 freshmen.

Girls soccer plays in the spring and this year there are 33 members on the team. Taking the field are nine seniors, seven juniors, 11 sophomores and six freshmen.

The boys track and field team is comprised of 32 members—five seniors, six juniors, six sophomores and 15 freshmen.

Coal City's girls track team is comprised of 11 students—two seniors, one junior, two sophomores and six freshmen.

The Lady Coaler softball team has 28 members this season with one senior, six juniors, 11 sophomores and 10 freshmen.

The sixth spring sport offered at CCHS is boys tennis and this year's squad is comprised of 20 members with three seniors, six juniors, four sophomores and seven freshmen.