



COAL CITY COURANT.com

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A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER • (815) 634-0315

A Story of Kindness:

Tickets on sale for Coal City Theatre's production of Come From Away



Courtesy photo

AS THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks nears, the Coal City Theatre Department will tell the true story of an extraordinary act of kindness that unfolded in the aftermath of that tragic day. Come From Away is based on the remarkable story of the small community of Gander, Newfoundland, which welcomed thousands of airline passengers stranded when U.S. airspace was closed and incoming commercial flights were diverted. What began as an ordinary day quickly became an international sleepover. Thirty-eight planes carrying thousands of passengers from around the world landed in Gander. Despite cultural differences and language barriers, the people of Gander opened their homes and community to the unexpected visitors, offering food, music, friendship and a reminder that, in times of crisis, we are all part of a global family. Don't miss this heartwarming and inspiring story featuring [from left] Maddox Meents and Theo Fritz when it comes to the Coal City Performing Arts Center on Thursday, Sept. 10, and Saturday, Sept. 12, at 7 p.m., and Sunday, Sept. 13, at 2 p.m. Advance tickets are available at bit.ly/CCTheatreDept.

Diamond seeking \$1.5 million for water line upgrades

BY MIKE LOOMIS
CORRESPONDENT

An upgrade could be on the way for the water system in Diamond.

The village has applied for a \$1.5 million community development block grant to replace aging underground water mains. At their meeting on Aug. 11, Diamond's village board of commission approved an agreement with the North Central Illinois Council of Governments to have that entity administer the funds if the block grant is approved.

Diamond Mayor Terry Kernc said the replacing the water mains, which are located underneath streets at locations throughout the village, "lowers the risk of leaks and breaking."

Block grant funds for municipal infrastructure upgrades in Illinois comes from the federal government through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

For smaller, local governments like Diamond, HUD provides the money to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, which then distributes grants through an applica-

tion process.

The mayor said Diamond's application for the grant would likely receive approval within a few months, and replacement of the water mains will probably start in spring 2027 after the village puts the project up for bids.

Jim Dunning, Diamond's public works supervisor, explained that water mains deliver treated, potable water to residential and commercial structures in the village. They also serve the important function of supplying water to fire hydrants.

Dunning added that replacing the water mains will also give his department an opportunity to update the mapping of the underground water system infrastructure.

Mayor Kernc said the project fits with her goal of making lasting improvements to utilities in Diamond. "It would be a tremendous help to the next administration," she said.

The North Central Illinois Council of Governments, a nonprofit, recently provided administrative support for a block grant that funded housing improvements for income-qualified residents in Coal City.

Candidates for local office can obtain election petitions

Grundy County Clerk Kay Olson is reminding residents that several local offices will be on the ballot for the April 6, 2027 Consolidated Election.

The following offices are scheduled to be elected:

Municipal Offices: Mayor or Village President, Aldermen, Commissioners, or Trustees. Fire Protection District: Trustees. Library District: Trustees. Park District: Commissioners. School District: Board

Members. Regional Board of School: Trustees. Community College District: Trustees.

Petition Packets: The first day to pick up petition packets and begin circulating petitions for signatures was Tuesday.

In the Village of Coal City the terms of Mayor David Spesia, Clerk Kayla Melvin and Trustees Pamela Noffsinger, Dan Greggain and Dave Togliatti expire in April, 2027. Terms for Trustees CJ Lauterbur, Bill

Mincey and Ross Bradley expire in April 2029.

The Grundy County Clerk's Office provides petition packets for the following school boards only: Coal City Unit 1, Mazon-Verona-Kinsman 2C, Nettle Creek 24C, Morris 54, Saratoga 60C, Gardner 72, South Wilmington 74, Braceville 75, Minooka 201, GSW High 73, Morris High 101 and Minooka High 111.

Candidates for these school boards

may pick up a petition packet from the County Clerk's Office. Packets are also available on the County Clerk's website at www.grundycountyil.gov under Elections, Election Information. Candidates may also request a petition packet by email at elections@grundycountyil.gov.

Candidates for all other offices must obtain and file their petitions with the board or district for the office they are seeking.

SEE PETITIONS PAGE 2

Tornado's path of destruction confirmed



THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE issued the path of a EF1 tornado that hit Wilmington on the morning of Tuesday, Aug. 11. The path of destruction is highlighted in green.

STAFF REPORT

The National Weather Service in Chicago released a map last week tracing the 1.52-mile path of an EF1 tornado that cut through Wilmington on Aug. 11, leaving damaged buildings, uprooted trees and downed power lines in its wake.

The tornado touched down around 10:38 a.m. in the 500 block of West Baltimore Street, where it tore a section of roof from the Tire Tracks building. It traveled south for a short distance before turning southeast and crossing the Kankakee River.

SEE TORNADO PAGE 2



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Tornado, continued from page 1

National Weather Service investigators determine a tornado's path by conducting ground surveys of damaged areas and combining their findings with eyewitness accounts, photos, videos and reports from the public. The direction in which trees, structures and other debris fall can help survey teams identify where a tornado began, the route it followed and where it eventually lifted.

South Island Park was among the hardest-hit locations. Fencing was knocked down, plywood signs were destroyed and nearly two dozen trees sustained extensive damage. Two weeks after the storm, the city-owned park remains closed.

The tornado continued through Oakwood Cemetery, uprooting trees and snapping large branches from mature oaks. An estimated 40 trees in the cemetery were destroyed or damaged.

Power was knocked out to homes near South Water Street and throughout the downtown district at 10:39 a.m. when a massive tree fell onto a utility line and transformer in the 800 block. The fallen tree also blocked traffic along Illinois Route 102.

Wilmington wasn't the only community where tornadoes were confirmed from the Aug. 11 storms. National Weather Service survey teams also identified two EF0 tornadoes in Grundy County near Morris.

One touched down on the northeast side of Morris, damaging crops before eyewitnesses reported seeing it cross Interstate 80. The tornado then struck a trailer retailer along U.S. Route 6, peeling sheet metal roofing from the main office and damaging about 50 trailers, some of which were rolled by the wind. A semi-truck was blown into a ditch and power lines were knocked down.

The tornado continued southeast, damaging trees near the Grundy County Rod and Gun Club.

A second EF0 tornado touched down in Norman Township northwest of Dupont and Verona roads. Investigators found a narrow path of damage through a cornfield before the tornado struck a property along Dupont Road, tearing away a large portion of a barn roof, pushing a grain bin off its foundation and downing several trees.

Additional tree damage was found near Dupont and Gorham roads before the tornado lifted.

No injuries were reported from either of the tornadoes.

Petitions, continued from page 1

Filing Petitions: Candidates may file their petitions in person, either personally or through a candidate representative, beginning Tuesday, Nov. 16, through Monday, Nov. 23. The Grundy County Clerk's Office is open for filing from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The office will remain open until 5:00 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 23, the last day of filing. Petitions may also be filed by mail at: Grundy County Clerk, 111 E. Washington St., Room 12,

Morris, IL 60450. Mailed petitions must be received by Monday, Nov. 23. Petitions received before the first day of filing cannot be accepted.

The County Clerk and staff cannot provide legal opinions or legal advice regarding petition papers. Candidates with questions about their petition packets are encouraged to consult their own legal advisors. Once petition papers are filed, they cannot be changed or amended. Nominating papers may also be subject to legal challenges by qualified objectors.

The 2027 Candidates Guide and 2027 Abbreviated Calendar are available on the Illinois State Board of Elections website at elections.il.gov.

For details contact the Grundy County Clerk's Office at (815) 941-3222, or email elections@grundycountyil.gov.

Coal Bin to dispose of property

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE
Notice is hereby given, that pursuant to Section 40 of the Self-Storage Facility Act, State of Illinois, a sale or other disposition of property by COAL BIN STORAGE, INC. will be held online at www.BID13.com, auction ending on September 9, 2026, 1 p.m. to sell or dispose of the personal property of the following person, APRIL WIEGAND, 1010 S. Sandstone, Diamond, IL. Unit E25/Location #1 to enforce a lien for storage pursuant to the self-storage facility act, in the amount of \$685 plus attorney fees and costs.

Published in the Coal City Courant on Aug. 26 and Sept. 2, 2026.

Meents Law P.C. files Odom estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
GRUNDY COUNTY, ILLINOIS
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF SUZANNE LEE ODOM A/K/A SUZANNE MARIE LEE ODOM Deceased;
No. 2026 PR 56

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of SUZANNE LEE ODOM A/K/A SUZANNE MARIE LEE ODOM, Letters of Office as Independent Administrator was issued on July 29, 2026, to William Zacharias Jr., whose address is 20926 Charlotte Ave, Custer Park 60481; whose attorney is Meents Law, P.C., 25158 West Eames Street, Unit A, Channahon, Illinois 60410. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at the GRUNDY County Courthouse, 111 East Washington Street, #30, Morris, Illinois 60450, or with the representative, or both, on or before February 12, 2027, or if mailing or delivery of a notice from the representative is required by Section 18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a Claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered by the claimant to the representative and to the attorney within ten (10) days after it has been filed.

E-filing is now mandatory with limited exceptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit <http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/fac/geth-elp.asp> or talk with your local circuit clerk's office. If you cannot e-file, you may be able to get an exemption that allows you to file in-person or by mail. Ask your circuit clerk for more information or visit www.illinoislegalaid.org.

William Zacharias Jr.
Independent Administrator of the Estate of SUZANNE LEE ODOM A/K/A SUZANNE MARIE LEE ODOM, Deceased

Dylan J. Hakey
Meents Law, P.C.
25158 W Eames Street, Unit A
Channahon, Illinois 60410
Telephone: (815) 534-9515
Facsimile: (815) 534-9516
Attorney Code: 6352259
E-mail: Dylan@meentslaw.com
Published in the Coal City Courant on Wednesday, Aug. 12, 19, and 26, 2026.

Published in the Coal City Courant on Aug. 19, 26 and Sept. 2, 2026.

Latest storm adds to tornado record

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

Illinois has already experienced more tornadoes in 2026 than in any other year on record, with more than 203 confirmed twisters reported across the state before the middle of August.

As of Aug. 12, the National Weather Service confirmed more than triple the state's annual average of approximately 66 tornadoes. The previous state record was 142 tornadoes, set in 2024.

The extraordinary number of tornadoes follows months of unusually

severe weather across Illinois. Meteorologists have pointed to a combination of persistent heat and humidity and weather patterns that repeatedly brought favorable conditions for severe thunderstorms and tornadoes to the Midwest.

The activity continued Aug. 11 when a powerful derecho swept across northern Illinois and northwest Indiana.

Wilmington was among the communities struck on Aug 11. The National Weather Service confirmed an EF-1 tornado touched down just north of Wilmington at about 10:35 a.m. Aug. 11 and traveled 1.52 miles

before lifting about two minutes later east of the city.

The Wilmington tornado was one of several confirmed tornadoes produced by the Aug. 11 derecho. The National Weather Service ultimately confirmed eight tornadoes within the Chicago-area area including two in Grundy County north and then south of Morris.

For Illinois, the Aug. 11 tornadoes represent only part of an extraordinary year. The state's 2026 tornado count has already surpassed the previous annual record by more than 60 tornadoes, and tornado season is not necessarily over.



Courtesy photos
COAL CITY HIGH School Scholastic Bowl coaches Mark Fisk and Tyler Castle share their team's successes with students and faculty members during Club Coaler Day.



COAL CITY HIGH Schools Drama Club is one of the most active groups in the school and boasts a membership of nearly 100 students. Drama Club officers Gabby VanDuyne and Cora Armstrong [right] interact with students including club member Jaycee Chase [left].

Connecting beyond the classroom

Coal City High School offers students a wide variety of extra- and co-curricular opportunities designed to spark interests and build connections beyond the classroom.

With more than 35 clubs, organ-

izations, and activities to choose from—including options like Madrigals, Reading Club, Ping Pong Club, and Drama Club—there is truly something for everyone to get involved in.

On Aug. 19 the high school held its annual Club Coaler Day, providing students an opportunity to learn more about each club, organization and program offered, as well as how to join.

Coal City Public Library calendar

Check online event calendar at ccpld.org for events details and register at www.ccpld.org.

In-Person Adult Exercise, Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays 9-10 a.m. First half hour is cardio and the second half is weights, resistance band and strength training.

Thursday, Aug. 27
Terrific Tots, 10 a.m. Children 2 years old-3 years old and their caregiver can attend this fun and interactive class. Each week we will focus on a different letter of the alphabet through stories, songs, a craft, and a nursery rhyme.

Family Story and Play Time, 11 a.m., short story-

time with songs. Each week we'll have a new theme and get out different toys to focus on different skills. No registration required.

Terrific Tots, 6 p.m.
Painted Dornat, 6 p.m.
Friday, Aug. 28
Family Caregivers Support Group, 10 a.m.
Gamer's Guild, 3:30 p.m.

Bunco, 6 p.m.
Movie at Diamond Park, 8 p.m. All are welcome for snacks and water at Diamond Park. The library in collaboration with the Village of Diamond will show the movie "GOAT."

Saturday, Aug. 29
Midtown Market, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. CCPLD will be hosting an outdoor farmer's market. Over 30 artisan and food vendors scheduled.
Monday, Aug. 31

Terrific Tots, 9 a.m.
Preschool Storytime, 11 a.m. Register your 3-5 year old who is ready to attend class on their own. Each week we will focus on a different letter of the alphabet through stories, songs, a craft, and a nursery rhyme.

Eager Readers Homeschool, 1 p.m. Register your Kdg.-2nd grader for some book themed activities and fun.

Epic Quest Homeschool Group, 1 p.m. Register 3rd-6th graders for book themed activities.

Eager Readers, 4 p.m. Register your Kdg.-3rd grader for some book themed activities and fun.

Family Lapsit, 6 p.m. 0 months - up to 3 years old and their caregiver can join us for stories, sensory activities, and songs with each week focusing on a differ-

ent theme each month.
Preschool Storytime, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 1
Adult Book Club, 1 p.m.

Tween Afternoon s Unplugged, 3:15 p.m. 4th and 5th graders can register for different themes and activities each month including a snack. This month is TikTok trends - we will be trying different viral TikTok snacks and creations seen on the platform.

Wednesday, Sept. 2
Senior Health Insurance Program, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Paper & More, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Family Lapsit, 9:30 a.m. 3 months - 23 months and their caregivers. Preschool Storytime, 9:30 a.m.

Hometown Storage to dispose of property

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice of Lien
Hometown Storage, 2920 E. Division St., Diamond, IL 60416, 815-634-3333 hereby is asserting a Possessory Lien in pursuant to your contract and the State of Illinois Self-Service Facility Act.

Tenant: Zackery Mcelfresh 16 W. Washington Dr. Diamond, IL 60416. If unpaid rental charges, late fees and associated charges are not paid for in full by August 31, 2026, the property within Unit D12 will be sold to satisfy the lien.

Published in the Coal City Courant on August 19 and 26, 2026.

Attorney Black files DePaape estate claim notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
GRUNDY COUNTY - IN PROBATE
No. 2026 PR 68

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given to creditors of the death of JUDITH ANN DEPAEPE. Letters of office as Independent Executor were issued to DEBORAH ANN STUTZKI, 1494 Jo Lin Drive, Morris, Illinois, 60450 whose attorney is DONALD F. BLACK, BLACK & BLACK LAWYERS, 201 Liberty Street, Suite 211, Morris, Illinois 60450.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at Grundy County Courthouse, 111 E. Washington St., Morris, IL 60450, with the representative, or both, within six months from the date of the first publication of this notice or, if mailing or delivery of a notice is required by Section 5/18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.

DEBORAH ANN STUTZKI
INDEPENDENT EXECUTOR
Donald F. Black
Black & Black Lawyers
201 Liberty Street
Suite 211
P.O Box 148
Morris, IL 60450
815-942-0594

Published in the Coal City Courant on Aug. 19, 26 and Sept. 2, 2026.

Coal Bin to dispose of property

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE
Notice is hereby given, that pursuant to Section 40 of the Self-Storage Facility Act, State of Illinois, a sale or other disposition of property by COAL BIN STORAGE, INC. will be held online at www.BID13.com, auction ending on September 9, 2026, 1 p.m. to sell or dispose of the personal property of the following person, KURT HOLLWEDEL, 213 Harbor Landing, Braidwood, IL. UnitA10/Location #1 to enforce a lien for storage pursuant to the self-storage facility act, in the amount of \$810 plus attorney fees and costs.

Published in the Coal City Courant on Aug. 26 and Sept. 2, 2026.

Attorney Meents files adoption notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
GRUNDY COUNTY, ILLINOIS
IN RE THE MATTER OF:
ELIZABETH BLANK and JOSEPH BLANK,
Petitioners
to adopt
HUNTER J. BRYAN, a minor.
No. 2026AD5

NOTICE

TO: MICHAEL STEWART
Take notice that a Petition for Adoption was filed in the Circuit Court of Grundy County, Illinois. This matter is scheduled for Summons Return before the Circuit Court of Grundy County, 111 E. Washington Street, Morris, Illinois, Room West on the 28th day of September, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. Now, therefore, unless you, MICHAEL STEWART, appear and file an Appearance or Response on or before September 25, 2026, before the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Grundy County, 111 E. Washington Street, Morris, Illinois 60450; a default may be entered against you at any time after that day and a judgment entered in accordance with the prayer of said Petition for Adoption.
Dated: August 24, 2026
Corri Trotter AC
Clerk of the Circuit Court

Ethan D. Chouinard
Meents Law, P.C.
25158 West Eames Street, Unit A
Channahon, Illinois 60410
Telephone: (815) 534-9515
Facsimile: (815) 534-9516
Attorney No. 06329544
E-mail: ethan@meentslaw.com
Published in the Coal City Courant on Wednesday, Aug. 26, Sept. 2 & 9, 2026.

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher

Traveling history's highways looking for our roots

Most of my gentle readers know that the land upon which we live did not always belong to the United States, it also belonged to the English and before then it was France. That history seems so long ago that most of us have forgotten it. Most think that there are no traces left of this ancient past of ours. They would be wrong. Today we take a road trip to a place not all that far away, where you can still see traces even today. We are traveling to Vincennes, Indiana.

At first, when the French came to the Midwest, their only interest was fur trading, but it soon became evident that this new land was unguarded, ripe for an attack by the English, long before the enemy of France. Soon they built forts, or outposts at Kaskaskia, Cahokia and Peoria. Another was built on the banks of the "Oubache" (now known as the Wabash) in 1702 at Vincennes, Indiana.

Illinois remained French territory until the end of the 7 Years War in 1783 when France ceded the whole Northwest Territory to England. Those living in the area immediately became English citizens.

And while the Revolutionary War was being fought in the east, it was also being fought in the Northwest Territory. The English established posts at Kaskaskia and Cahokia, only to lose them to one of the least known heroes of the Revolution. George Rogers Clark, older brother to William Clark of the Lewis & Clark expedition.

Clark was known as an Indian fighter and a man others could rally around. He took the English fort at Kaskaskia on July 4, 1778 240 years ago without firing a shot.

He had also taken Vincennes, but it was retaken by British General Hamilton who made it his base. Hamilton then settled in for the winter, not believing warfare was possible in the fierce Midwest blizzards. He was wrong.

George Rogers Clark, in one of the most courageous marches on military record, took 170 men in February of 1879 through the frozen flooded swamps of southern Illinois, 200 miles to Vincennes. The last week of the trip the men were in water up to their chests the entire time, and without food or fire.

By sheer force of will they all made it through and convincing the English that they had a bigger force than they really had, convinced General Hamilton to surrender without a shot. Clark intended to move on to Detroit, but the treaty of 1783 gave the Northwest Territory to the Americans.

The Territory was split up, Vincennes became the capital of the Indiana Territory with William Henry Harrison serving as its first governor. He built a fortress of a home along the Wabash, calling it Grouseland for the many upland birds in the area.

Completed in 1804 it is one of the most interesting homes that I have personally toured. The walls are 4 bricks thick, the windows have shutters inside and out, there is a well in the lowest level and an armory built into the hillside accessed through the basement. Almost all of the interior walls are curved, an amazing feat for such an early building. This was done to help conduct the breezes around a room, instead of trapping them in a corner.

The DAR can be credited with saving the building and succeeding caretakers have done an amazing job of restoration and furnishing the home with the original artifacts. This historic home is open to the public and is certainly well worth the trip.

Also, in Vincennes is the George Rogers Clark memorial, a massive granite structure erected at the site of Clark's victory over Hamilton. Inside murals depict the scenes of Clark's life and march, while you listen on headphones to the story of his life.

I found hotels and restaurants in the area very reasonably priced, but the best deal that I found was a small, old fashioned motel in Lawrenceville, across the Wabash from Vincennes in Illinois. Its name intrigued me, the Gas Lite Motel. I found that it was clean, had a refrigerator and microwave, and a television - all for a reasonable price.

Happy traveling!



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko



A PAINTING of George Rogers Clark.



THE CLARK MEMORIAL in Vincennes Indiana.

21 years, nine lives and a lifetime of love

BY CHARLIE BERTA

May, 2025

Twenty years ago I welcomed two kittens to my home. They were brothers from the same litter.

I named the black kitten Dee Brown after the U. of Illinois star basketball guard. This kitten, the runt of the litter, was lightning fast. The other gray and white kitten I named Sammy, a popular name at the time, and just sounded like a great name for a cat.

Why adopt two kittens? When I was away from the house they could keep each other company. Dee Brown and Sammy were to be raised in the house, never encountering the many dangers outside.

When I would arrive home the two cats would always greet me at the door. "Hi! Mr. Dee Brown and Sammy Sammy," I would say. They soon learned their names and responded when I called.

I carefully split my attention between the two of them. Each cat brushed equal time.

Dee Brown purred loudly when you petted him. His black velvet coat shined after being brushed. Dee Brown was quiet and shy, if his big brother did something, it was OK for him too. He wanted to be like Sammy. Also he had a huge appetite.

Soon little Dee Brown became a tough cat and threw easy going Sammy around in their wrestling matches. Dee Brown dominated, never releasing his claws. They had all the professional wrestling moves and more. I would break up these fierce wrestling matches. Dee Brown and Sammy stared at me wondering why I did that?

For 12 years I had two beautiful cats to keep me company. Never a dull moment. Wow did they eat. Sammy greeted people at the door. Dee Brown hid and came out later.

Sammy won the wrestling match one day. Then all of a sudden Dee Brown got sick and died of cancer. Sammy mourned and I feared he would pass too. But thanks to Dr. Shirkey, Sammy hung in there. They say cats have nine lives.

Now it's time for the rest of the story and Sammy's second life.

Every day is amazing. Sammy is half Siamese and loves to talk and socialize. He greets me at the door. Meow (*Where you been?*) He greets every visitor too, Meow, Meow!

My sister, Mary Jean called me, "How's Sammy?" He sat next to me and spoke into the phone, "Meow." My sister responded "Is Charlie brushing you Sammy?" "Meow, Meow."

I was away recovering from hip surgery and my good neighbor Tim cared for Sammy. He phoned me one day when he was over caring for Sammy. I asked, "How's Sammy?" Sammy responded over the phone "Meow, Meow, Meow!"

I knew Sammy might be a special pet one day when he was just a kitten. A Wimbledon Tennis match was being televised. Little Sammy sat on top of my old Zenith T.V. reaching down with his paw trying to catch the bouncing tennis ball.

Sammy is a creature of habit. Seems like he has a internal clock. Right on the minute. Meow, meow (*time for breakfast*). Waking up I responded, O.K. in a little



SAMMY CAT lived a long life, giving comfort to his master.

while. He used to mimic me (*in a little while*).

Sammy is just like Garfield too. Loves to eat. Runs around the island until I put my breakfast bowl down on the floor to lick clean. Loves his tuna treats after taking his medicine. Salmon and lasagna are his favorites too.

When eating a meal he takes breaks by walking away for 10 minutes. After a quick nap, he eats a little more then struts around like "Lion King."

Next in order, "*Brush me Charlie*." I am in awe watching him sit and look out different windows, checking the neighborhood out. Sammy's tail wags back and forth directing the band. Looking up at the birds, watching the squirrels, people walking and biking going by.

He especially loves standing up looking out the front screen door and his tail wags in time. Sammy looks out at night with his night vision. Loves to lay in the sun "*Oh this feels so good!*" Sammy talks when he's eating too. Sometimes, "*Oh this is so good!*" Meow, Meow.

Sammy looks so comfortable sleeping, lots of different relaxing positions - wakes up, stretches, lays back down in a curled new position. He had a smile on his face the other day. Wow!

In the middle of the night Sammy climbs up to my bed and sleeps by me. In the evening I sit in the recliner watching the TV and Sammy is on my lap and I pet him. It's good therapy for my hands and Sammy gets a good massage.

Twenty years of great company.

So what's the secret for Sammy's long life? Good doctoring (Dr. Johnson, Dr. Shirkey, etc.) and lots of T.L.C. Sammy and I are two seniors walking down the path helping each other along. He's my angel with whiskers. I thank God for another day with Sammy.

Registration open for Coal City Trap Team

Registration for the Coal City Trap Team's Fall season is open until Sept. 6. All middle and high school students are welcome to participate.

To be eligible, athletes must meet the following requirements:

- Complete a hunter's safety course.
- Have a parent or guardian who possesses a valid FOID card.
- Be enrolled in or have completed the five-week beginners course held on Monday nights at Diamond Indoor Trap Range.

Contact the Diamond Indoor Trap Range for information on enrolling in the course. Additional information is available at <https://tinyurl.com/ccin-sidcoalerathletics>

Petition to increase maintenance assessment for Maine Township Drainage & Levee District

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

IN THE MATTER OF
MAINE TOWNSHIP DRAINAGE AND LEVEE DISTRICT

No. 63-TX-3895

DRAINAGE NOTICE

On the 6th day of August, 2026, a Petition to Increase the Maximum Amount of the Annual Maintenance Assessment was filed in the Circuit Court of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, Grundy County, Illinois, Judge Sheldon Sobol presiding. The name of the District affected by the Petition is the Maine Township Drainage & Levee District.

The commissioners of the District seek to increase the amount of the maximum annual maintenance assessment levy. Currently, property in the District is assessed at a maximum of \$3.00 per acre, provided that every parcel of land in the District, regardless of size, is required to pay the greater of \$10.00 or an amount equal to the amount to the maintenance assessment multiplied by the number of acres in the owner's parcel.

The amount of the maximum per acre annual maintenance assessment proposed to be levied is \$5.00 per acre, provided that every parcel of land in the District, regardless of size, is required to pay the greater of \$25.00 or an amount equal to the amount of the maintenance assessment multiplied by the number of acres in the owner's parcel. The monies raised will be utilized to perform annual maintenance work, to pay obligations incurred by the District for incidental expenses, current expenses and obligations incurred in protecting the District, and for other lawful purposes.

The Petition will be heard by Judge Sheldon Sobol or such other judge as may be sitting in his stead, at the Grundy County Courthouse, 111 E. Washington Street, Upstairs courtroom, on September 21st, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. An annual maintenance assessment roll was filed with the Petition. The total amount of damages sought is none; The total amount of compensation proposed is none; the total amount of maximum annual maintenance assessment is \$21,966.10.

Mark Wills, David Hauschild, John D'Arcy, Commissioners of the Maine Township Drainage & Levee District.

/s/ Christopher M. Dearth
Christopher M. Dearth, Its Attorney

Christopher M. Dearth ARDC # 6305714
Law Offices of Christopher M. Dearth, P.C.
305 E North Street
Morris, Illinois 60450
(815) 941-4675
christopher.dearth@comcast.net
Published in the Coal City Courant on August 26, and Sept. 2, 2026.

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Not even a thank you

BRACEVILLE—The Braceville Fire Department has been outstanding for many years. A trustee volunteers for a three year term. If the firemen approve they send his name to County Board for approval. They are paid nothing for their service. Randy Berry was talked into volunteering and spent over 30 years doing this. He was staying another three years to break someone in to learn the banking and procedures. During all this time he improved the department with training and getting money and help build a new station. A person came to a fire meeting and said he was a county board member. He told Randy he was done and was no longer needed and could leave. After 30 years and more of service not even a thank you. Many felt we should have had a meeting at our village hall to thank Randy. If someone in your family got sick or was in an accident you would realize how important they are. After the meeting the County Board member told me, not the board that they we're going to make changes. He talked someone into taking Randy's place. I wonder if the person was approved by the board. When this was presented to the board most seemed unaware. After the meeting he told me changes were going to be made. To this day no changes have been made and more money is being spent before and he said nothing to the board. The Village of Braceville would like to know of any changes, we have seen none yet. Hoping the best for the people and Village of Braceville.

Biden deserves credit

WILMINGTON— Trump is now touting the 3.1% drop in prescription drug prices, biggest drop since 1963. Medicare first negotiated drug prices kicked in this year cutting prices 38%- 79% on 10 drugs. The out-of-pocket cap came from same law. Which law you ask? Biden Inflation Reduction Act. Not one Republican voted for it. That's right Joe Biden gets credited for this reduction. Not the guy who actually does get credit for being mentioned 38,000 times in Epstein Files.

What's the difference

SHADOW LAKES— My name is Dan Hill. Watching Channel 7, they are showing an aircraft carrier. A destroyer was without power for many, many days, I believe in the Pacific. But what did they show? An aircraft carrier. Of course most people today even the news would not know the damn difference.

Is city center a park?

BRAIDWOOD—I see the mayor got his city center passed under the guise of it being a park. Is it, though? Got that big old master plan which is a bunch of nothing because let's face it, Berkot's sales tax will amount to a big nothing. And you'd better believe that the mayor and his sidekick will grab the tax money — before the park district knows it's there — to build a city center in an alley where no one can even see it.

Join us, Braidwood

COAL CITY/BRAIDWOOD—Why aren't you people in Braidwood joining us people in Coal City in rejecting the huge data center? It's going to be right on the border of Braidwood. Do you honestly believe your electric and water won't also go sky high? Come on people, Let's fight

this corporate takeover.

Let's be real

BRAIDWOOD— Glad to see everyone survived the storm even if there was damage to property. The city handled it well. Braidwood always has. The idea of money to update and build new parks is great. Let's be real though. There isn't a lot of money going to come from Berkot's. Do we get money from Mastodon, too? Berkot's here in Braidwood is like a two out of 10. I don't know who runs that store, but the employees all seem down in the dumps. You don't have sale products in stock. I bought some marked down lunch meat and it was absolutely rotten. Throw it out don't mark it down.

Same old stuff

BRAIDWOOD—Pizza burgers! I like pizza burgers and like the author of last weeks comment, I am also sick of hearing all the political rants. He is our President, like it or not. He cannot run again. If he could, I doubt he would be elected. Let's give it a break and have positive posts that are pleasant to read instead of the same stuff every week.

Election time chaos

BRAIDWOOD—Who's looking forward to enduring seven months of local election mud slinging? Candidates for all five seats on our local City Council will soon be circulating their petitions and filling voters heads with nothing but hatred for their opponents. Our local elections have gotten more and more vicious with each cycle and the amount of lies, mud slinging, name calling, finger pointing and trash talking has been taken to a whole new level. Our community was left in absolute political ruins after the last election, and the amount of division and contention in the community reached a whole new high. Unfortunately, our community has not even had a chance yet to recover from the special election two years ago and now we are going to be forced to endure it once again.

A knife in the back

WILMINGTON—America, America First, Buy American, Only American, hahaha, Trump personally approved importation (Trump Tariff Free) 300 Metric tons of foreign beef, to temporarily lower prices before midterm elections. Put another knife in the backs of American ranchers. Aren't you glad you voted for this bs artist again?

Storm entitlement

BRAIDWOOD—Why do Braidwood residents absolutely lose their minds whenever a storm comes through resulting in major damage and power loss in our town? Just browse through Facebook and you'll find tons of absolutely absurd comments, demands, and expectations. Apparently whenever the power goes out so does people's ability to use whatever common sense they have. Don't expect special attention from the power companies, don't demand an exact time when your power will be turned back on, don't rely on everyone else to solve your problems. Patience, patience, patience. That's what's needed. Prepare yourselves for the next storm because it will probably happen again and again. Chances are there's a ton of other things that 1st responders and utility crews have to worry about before

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

The Free Press Newspapers reserves the right to edit remarks for taste, length, personal attacks, racism, threatening, calls for boycotts and libel.

The comments stated are the opinions and ideas of the callers and not that of the newspaper.

Information may not constitute the actual events or facts of a particular topic.

Submissions by email to: courant@gmail.com with "soundoff" in the subject line or visit www.freepressnewspapers.com, or call 815-634-0317. Please state the town in which you are calling from or in regards to. Mail comments to Sound-Off, 271 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL 60416 or 111 S. Water St., Wilmington, IL 60481. There can be only one submission of 250 words or less per person during any given week.



they can get your power turned back on so you're TV, Xbox or laptop will work. Just imagine what people did before they had electricity. And, somehow, miraculously, they survived.

Can't afford his lies

WILMINGTON—Who would repeatedly say? "We won the Iran War and this is why we are going to bomb the hell out of them. "Huh? He got us in this mess as another distraction from the Epstein Files, the blundering tariffs mess, the loss of promised manufacturing jobs, the Epstein Files, the Family grift of taxpayers money to new made-up Family businesses, the ICE run amok fiasco, the disregard of the U.S.S. Lincoln record deployment and terrible conditions, affordability of life to struggling US families, the Epstein Files, the lies of potential nuclear threats. He promised no new wars, now defend him logically. People are finally realizing we can't afford his lies and blatant deceit.

Being eaten alive

BRAIDWOOD—Why isn't the Reed Township Mosquito Abatement District spraying for mosquitoes? We can't even sit outside on our patios to enjoy the evening without being bitten alive by mosquitoes. Maybe it's time for them to start doing the work they get paid to do instead of just maintaining the lawn outside of their building. The Reed Township Mosquito Abatement District is a taxing body. Maybe it's also time for residents to start holding them accountable for spending our tax dollars for the purposes that they are supposed to be. They also do not have a website to share public information or finances like they should be. Talk about a lack of transparency. They have a Facebook Page that indicates they will inform residents when and where they will be spraying for mosquitoes, but the page hasn't been updated since 2021.

We can't afford this

WILMINGTON—This is our current fiscal situation in the United States. National Debt \$40 Trillion, Mortgage rates 6.7%, Diesel fuel over \$5 gallon, food up 3% from last year and shelter up 3.2% from last year, inflation at 3.5% and rising.

Trump Administrations so far, in less than six total years account for \$11.6 Trillion or 29% of the total debt of 250 years. of America's existence. We can't afford Republican policies.

No Islamic influence

WILMINGTON—The Democratic Party now supports Islam thinking that they can control them for votes, look at Europe. Don't let this happen to America.

All we got is war

WILMINGTON—\$40 TRILLION in debt. What did we get? Healthcare no, cheaper housing no, groceries, gas, clothes. Nope, prices going up. We got more bombs, tanks and Humvees putting all that defense budget cash directly into pockets of the billionaires that own vast majority of those companies. Some of those same billionaires are in those Epstein files like the guy who approved this distraction war.

Toys for Tots success

I want to give a shout out to Freak and Al is staff at Top fuel as well as IBEW for another Toys for Tots Run as well as Coal City PD, the Sheriff's Department and fire department. They did a phenomenal job in escorting and blocking for all the bikers. Thank you for keeping us all safe for this great charity event and I also want to thank IBEW for all their hard work blocking and keeping the bikers safe. See ya next year.

D from Braidwood

Yard waste in landfill

COAL CITY—I just watched the yard waste and garbage all go into the same truck for the fourth week in a row. I don't know why we have yard waste pickup when it goes to the landfill. I reported it to the village hall, but it didn't seem to do any good.

Reduce costs and taxes

BRAIDWOOD—To all the elected officials, shouldn't part of your job be how to reduce costs and taxes, not just raise taxes to buy another forest preserve, another new fire truck, or put synthetic grass on the football field? It's hard to like Illinois any more. It's really a bad state and I'm sorry for it.

Governor recently signs 87 new bills into law

BY BEN SZALINSKI
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

Most Illinois retailers will be required to accept cash payments beginning in 2028 under a bill Gov. JB Pritzker signed Friday.

House Bill 4592 requires retailers that employ someone to process in-person consumer transactions must accept cash payments on purchases under \$500, though the businesses do not have to accept bills larger than \$20.

The requirement does not apply to self-checkout machines, overnight sales, if a business runs out of cash, membership-only businesses, or phone or internet purchases. Businesses that do not follow the law will have to pay fines.

The measure is one of 87 bills Pritzker signed into law last week.

Jury pay

Employers will now have to pay their employees their full rate of pay while they are serving on jury duty. Businesses with 25 or fewer employees are exempt from the requirement, which begins Jan. 1, 2027.

CPR practice

House Bill 4788 requires schools, beginning in the

2028-2029 school year, to provide breasted and non-breasted manikins for CPR practice in middle school and high school. The goal is to give students more practice with female victims, who studies show are less likely to receive help from bystanders when suffering cardiac arrest. Illinois bill aims to address gender discrepancies in CPR training

Workload report

Senate Bill 3314 requires higher education institutions to provide more transparency about how many credits their faculty members are teaching.

The law requires the state's colleges and universities to, beginning in Sept. 2028, report annually the number of credit hours being taught by full- and part-time faculty members. The reports would be organized by tenure status and discipline.

Lawmakers supporting the bill said the goal is to provide more transparency for students and educators about the higher education system and ensure faculty members are receiving necessary support.

Human trafficking

Drivers on Illinois interstates will soon notice more information about human trafficking at rest stops.

House Bill 4654 requires the Illinois Department of

Transportation to install signs with resources for human trafficking victims in bathrooms at all rest areas, beginning immediately.

Airport noise

Senate Bill 4041 requires O'Hare and Midway airports in Chicago to conduct noise studies at least every five years beginning by the end of 2030. The study must map out how sound is distributed around the airport and forecast how noise will be distributed going forward.

Mental health treatment

House Bill 5193 allows more patients to be transported by ambulance to a mental health institution rather than a hospital emergency room beginning immediately. The law now allows people under the influence of drugs or alcohol to be transported to approved mental health facilities if EMTs determine that's a more appropriate location and it is approved by their supervisors.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

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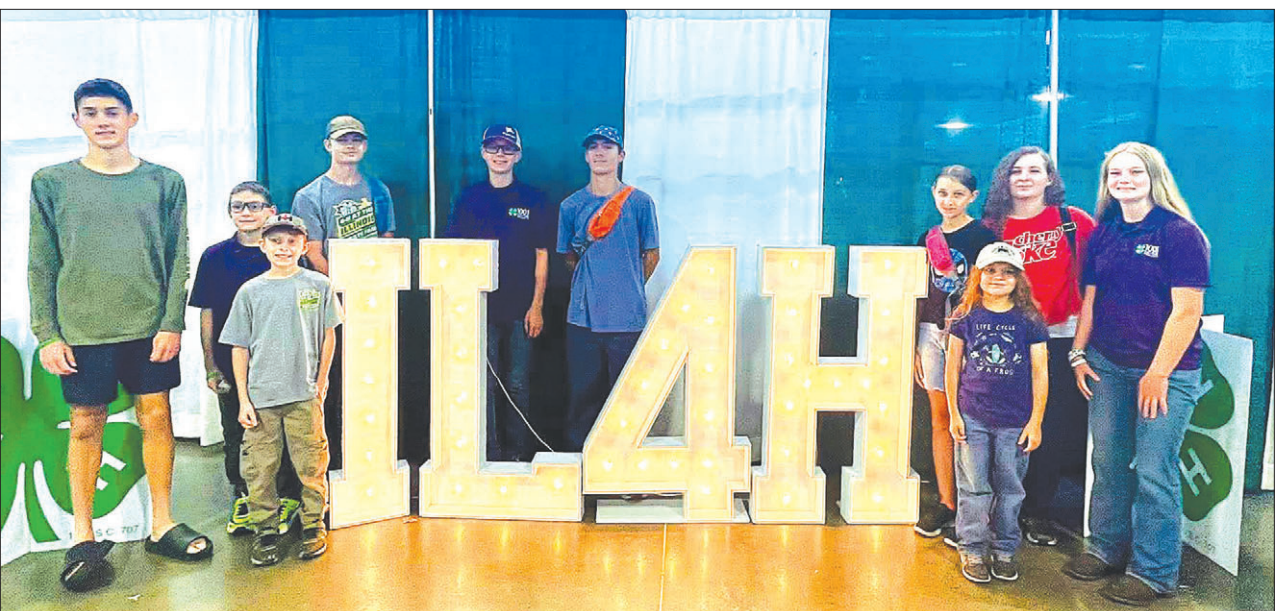
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Courtesy photo
MEMBERS OF THE Wesley 4-H Hustlers prior to judging at the Orr Building on the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield (from left) Jacob Floyd, Caleb Floyd, Caleb Merkel, Josiah Merkel, Benjamin Floyd, Henry Merkel, Charlotte Merkel, Caroline Merkel, Samantha Merkel and Tracy Jones.

Wesley 4-H Hustlers represent southern Will County at State Fair

Members from the Wesley 4-H Hustlers club of Wilmington and Braidwood attended and competed in the 173rd Illinois State Fair in Springfield.

On Saturday, Aug. 15, club members that had their projects selected at the Will County General Project Show, to represent Will County, at the state fair, competed against 4-H members from around the state in their respective project categories.

The results from their showing at the state fair are:

- Samantha Merkel;

Beekkeeping 3 – 2026 Champion Award

- Josiah Merkel; Woodworking 3 – 2026 Reserve Champion

- Tracy Jones; Tractors – 2026 Champion Award

- Caleb Floyd; Visual Arts/Mixed Media – 2026 Reserve Champion

- Benjamin Floyd; Civil Engagement – 2026 Champion Award

The state fair is always a time of reflection for 4-H'ers as the activity year ends on Aug. 31 each year. With the 2027 4-H year starting in September, new members are always welcome, as the Wesley 4-H

Hustlers continue on the tradition that 4-H in general has had of "Individual Learning and Development; through Group Service", and follow the 4-H motto of "To Make the Best Better".

Membership is open to any youth between those ages of 5-18 years old.

About Wesley 4-H Hustlers

Wesley 4-H Hustlers is one of the oldest continuously operating 4-H clubs within the State of Illinois; dating back to 1928.

This club was formed

in Wesley Township, and today is based out of Wilmington. The primary area of focus for this youth organization is Wilmington, Wesley, Florence, Reed, and Custer Townships in Southern Will County, but is open to all individuals regardless of location of residence.

Learn more about 4-H at www.4-H.org, find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/4-H.

Higgins graduates Coe College

Max Higgins was among a group of truly exceptional graduates this past year at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, IA.

Higgins, of Wilmington, was awarded a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in computer science and data science.

aged to register. Registration includes an event T-shirt, finisher medal, admission wristband to Elwood Community Days beer ticket for participants 21 years of age or older, and the opportunity to honor America's heroes while supporting a meaningful cause.

Community members can purchase an official In Memory of Our Fallen Heroes event T-shirt online. Shirts are available for anyone who wants to proudly wear them throughout Elwood Community Days while honoring our Fallen Heroes.

Community members who are unable to participate are also encouraged to support the event through sponsorships, volunteer opportunities, or donations.

Registration is now open. For race registration, sponsorship opportunities, volunteer information, donations, or to purchase an official event T-shirt, visit: <https://runsignup.com/Race/IL/Elwood/ElwoodCommunityDaysK>.

Library to hold book sale

The Wilmington Public Library District will hold a used book sale on Friday and Saturday, Aug. 28 & 29 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday, Aug. 30 from noon to 4 p.m. Patrons can fill a library-provided bag with books for just \$3 per bag.

The library will accept donations of clean, smoke-free, and mold-free books and DVDs until Aug. 26.

Please note that encyclopedias, VHS tapes, outdated medical or textbooks, and other obsolete materials will not be accepted.

All proceeds from this book sale will benefit ShareFest of Will County. Thank you for supporting the library and helping us give great books a second chapter.

P.E.O. walk day held

P.E.O. Chapter GK participated in an international "Walk Today for Women Tomorrow" event.

This event was both a friend raiser and a fundraiser as members walked and visited as well as raised money for P.E.O. Educational programs and services for women around the globe. Members were able to choose the area they walked in.

Mum flower fundraiser

The First Presbyterian Church of Braidwood is holding a Fall Mum Flower Sale.

These huge 9 inch pots will be delivered to the church on Wednesday, Sept. 16, and will be ready to bloom beautifully for your fall decorating.

They are \$12 each and are available in orange, yellow, purple, pink, bronze & white.

Call or text LuAnn Bolatto at 815-790-7134, Lora Grant 815-955-9927 or Joyce Bauer at 815-584-7239, by Sept 9 to order.

Registration underway for Fallen Heroes run & walk during Elwood Community Days

The Bradley Veerman Charity Fund is proud to announce the annual In Memory of Our Fallen Heroes 5K Run & Walk, taking place on Friday, Sept. 1, at Lloyd Erickson Park in Elwood.

The event begins with a special remembrance ceremony at 5 p.m., followed by the 5K Run & Walk at 6 p.m.

This year's event holds special significance as the nation commemorates the 25th anniversary of September 11, 2001.

Participants will gather to remember the lives lost, honor the courage and sacrifice of first responders and public servants, and celebrate the enduring spirit of service that continues to unite communities across America.

Hosted in conjunction with Elwood Community Days, the event benefits the Bradley Veerman Charity Fund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting first responders, advancing public safety initiatives, providing EMS education, and assisting charitable organizations that serve our communities.

The charity was established in memory of Bradley Veerman, a dedicated firefighter, paramedic, police officer, Executive Director of the Laraway Emergency Telephone System Board (Will County 9-1-1), and public servant whose passion for helping others continues to inspire the organization's mission.

The Bradley Veerman Charity Fund has provided educational scholarships, supported emergency responders and partnered with organizations committed to improving public safety throughout the region.

"Our goal is to bring our community together to remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice while continuing Bradley's legacy of compassion, service, and commitment to helping others," said April Veerman, President of the Bradley Veerman Charity Fund.

"Every participant, volunteer, sponsor, donor, and supporter helps us honor our fallen heroes while making a lasting difference in our communities."

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Bruce S. Kester



PONTIAC—Bruce S. Kester, 90, of Pontiac, IL, passed away Sunday, Aug. 16, 2026, at Aperia Care in Wilmington. Born Feb. 3, 1936, in White Haven, PA, Bruce was the son of Gilbert and Amanda E. (née Wagner) Kester. On Feb. 15, 1958, Bruce married Flora Smith in California. Together, they shared 68 years of marriage and a lifetime of memories. Bruce proudly served his country in the United States Air Force from July 1954 until his honorable discharge in April 1958. During his nearly four years of active-duty service, he served as a Still Photographer, using his skills in photography in support of Air Force operations. He was stationed with the 3535th Air Base Group at Mather Air Force Base in California and attained the rank of Airman First Class. In recognition of his honorable and dedicated service, Bruce was awarded the National Defense Service Medal and the Good Conduct Medal. Throughout his career, Bruce worked as a project manager for several chemical companies. He was an avid reader and particularly enjoyed the works of John Grisham and Tom Clancy. Bruce was of the Presbyterian faith. Surviving are his wife, Flora Kester; five children: Sherry (Robert) Kontes, of



Idaho Falls, ID; Brian (Trenna) Kester, of Idaho Falls, ID; Aaron (Corinne Ptacek) Kester, of Roselle, IL; Amanda (Jim) Passafiume, of Channahon and Sidney (Jennifer Williams) Kester, of Mazon; nine grandchildren: Deanna Riggs, Brayden (Marie) Passafiume, Quintin Kester, Joshua Passafiume, Ema Kester, Sean Reavley, Kevin Reavley, Kaitlyn Mainard, and Makenzi Williams and two great-grandchildren, Reese Stukel and Brooklyn Stukel; and one brother, Carl (Alice) Kester, of Florida. Bruce was preceded in death by his parents, Gilbert and Amanda Kester and five siblings: Clayton Kester, Berle Kester, Janet Snyder, Gilbert Kester, and Raymond Kester. In accordance with Bruce's wishes, cremation rites will be accorded. A memorial visitation will be held Thursday, Aug. 27, 2026, from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. at R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory in Braidwood. To share memories or offer condolences, please visit Bruce's online guestbook at www.rwpattersonfuneralhomes.com or find them on Facebook. R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory, 401 E. Main St., Braidwood is in charge of arrangements.

Nancy Skowron

ROMEONVILLE—Nancy Amalie (Rehor) Skowron, 94, of Romeoville, IL, passed away peacefully on Aug. 20, 2026, in Joliet. She was born on Nov. 22, 1931, in Chicago, to Frank and Ana (Pokorny) Rehor, and grew up in the Chicago area. Her parents eventually moved to Hayward, WI, where they operated a fishing resort. This is where she met the love of her life, Mitchell J. Skowron. She was working seasonally for the resort and he was there with his fishing buddies. They were married on Oct. 5, 1951, and were married for 63 cherished years until his passing. They lived in Chicago for a few years before moving to a home that they built in Lyons, IL. After raising a family of six children in Lyons, they retired to life in the country in Wilmington. Nancy loved gardening, and she turned a three acre cornfield into flower gardens, vegetable gardens, and fruit tree orchards. She put many miles on her golf cart riding around the property. She was very proud of the 50 foot long stone wall that she built, rock by rock. She worked as a librarian in Lyons, and then at the libraries of Morton College and Argonne National Laboratory. Nancy loved reading, and probably read hundreds of books in her lifetime. She was always up for a game of cards with friends and loved ones, but above all, she treasured every moment spent surrounded by her family. Eventually, Nancy moved to assisted living at StoryPoint in Romeoville, IL. While it was not the dream home she built



in Wilmington, it was home because the nurses and aides were friends as well as caretakers. She was a devoted mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Known for her positive outlook, sharp humor, and uplifting nature. Nancy had a gift for offering wise, caring advice to those around her. Nancy is survived by her loving children: Robert (Rebecca) Skowron, of Franktown, CO; Loretta Skowron, of Champaign, IL; Annette Skowron, of Salem, OR; Paul (Nancy) Skowron, of Loveland, CO and Janet (Skowron) (Dan) Jay of Wilmington; 10 cherished grandchildren: Michael Skowron, Nicolette Day, Joseph Taylor Gooch, Mitchell Benjamin Gooch, Natalia (Gooch) Newman, Svetlana Gooch, Elizabeth Skowron, Mariah Skowron, Cody Jay, and Shane Jay and four beloved great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband, Mitchell Skowron; her daughter, Natalie Skowron and brother, Franklin Rehor. A graveside burial service will be held at 12 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 29, 2026, at Resurrection Cemetery, 7201 Archer Rd., Justice, IL. Family and friends will have an opportunity to share their memories during the service. A reception meal will follow; please RSVP to Janet. Casual attire is fine. In lieu of flowers, please donate to the charity of your choice. Funeral arrangements are provided by Damar-Kaminski Funeral Home. For more information or to leave online condolences, please visit www.KaminskiFamilyFuneralHomes.com.

Mary T. Grygiel

BRAIDWOOD—Mary T. "Pee Wee" Grygiel, of Braidwood, passed away Aug. 17, 2026. Born June 26, 1929, she was the daughter of Mabel and History Danzero. She went to Reed-Custer High School and was a member of Immaculate Conception Church. She lived in Braidwood her entire life. On June 26, 1948 she married Chester Grygiel. They together had two sons Michael (Karen) and Gregory (Sue) and one daughter, Mary Ellen (Gary) Sanches. She worked for Grinchucks Pants

Factory then the Joliet Arsenal making bombs for WWII. After that she went to work for Reed-Custer School District and retired from there. She has one special brother-in-law, Jerome Grygiel, 10 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Mary was preceded in death by her husband, Chester; son, Gregory and son-in-law, Gary Sanches. Cremation Rites were accorded by her request. A celebration of life will be held at a later date.

High schoolers can compete in Voice of Democracy contest

High school students from Wilmington, Coal City and Reed-Custer now have an opportunity to compete for scholarships through the Illinois VFW Auxiliary's 2026-2027 Scholarship Program, which recognizes students for their patriotism, creativity and commitment to honoring America's veterans. Among the opportunities available to area students is the Voice of Democracy Audio-Essay Competition, which is open to students in grades 9-12. This year's theme is "What a Veteran Taught Me About America." Students will submit an original recorded essay reflecting on the topic. The deadline to enter the Voice of Democracy competition is Oct. 31, 2026. Students with artistic talents may also participate in the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest, open to grades 9-12. The contest invites students to create original patriotic artwork, including both traditional two-dimensional pieces and three-dimensional art. Entries for the art competition are due by March 31, 2027. In addition to student competitions, the VFW Auxiliary offers a Continuing Education Scholarship for VFW Auxiliary members and their immediate family members pursuing higher education, technical school, trade school or vocational training. Applications for that scholarship are due Feb. 15, 2027. The scholarship program is sponsored by the VFW Auxiliary Department of Illinois under the theme, "Their Fight. Their Story. Our Voice." The organization says the program is designed to honor veterans while inspiring students through education, patriotism and community involvement. Students interested in entering any of the competitions or learning more about eligibility and application requirements can contact Barbara Sweger, Department Scholarship Chairman, at deputy-louth@yahoo.com or 815-481-8288 for additional information. Local contacts include Kathryn Keller at 815-823-4324 or Barb Howard, 815-685-0399.

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Lynn Kratochvil



COAL CITY—Lynn W. Kratochvil, 84 and a lifelong resident of Coal City, passed away Aug. 20, 2026 at his home. Born June 16, 1942, in Morris, Lynn Wayne was a son of Frank James and Irene (Emanuelson) Kratochvil. He was raised in Coal City, a community he was proud to call home throughout his life. Lynn graduated from Coal City High School with the Class of 1960 and went on to honorably serve his country in the United States Army. Following his military service, Lynn built a long and dedicated career with Mobil Oil Corporation, retiring after more than 20 years of service. Lynn was a member of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church in Coal City, the Coal City Area Club, Area #1 Miners Recreational Club, the National Rifle Association, and Ducks Unlimited. He also gave back to his community through his service on the board of the Braceville-Gardner Cemetery Association. Those who knew Lynn will remember a man who found great happiness in the simple things in life. He loved being outdoors, whether hunting, fishing, tending to his garden, or simply enjoying the world around him. He also enjoyed cooking and sharing what he made with the people he loved. Above all, family was at the heart of Lynn's life. Time spent with his family, and especially with his grandchildren, brought him some of his greatest joy. The memories made around the table, outdoors, and during the ordinary moments of everyday life will remain a treasured part of his legacy.



Lynn will be remembered for his love of family, his connection to the Coal City community, his appreciation for the outdoors, and the many traditions and memories he leaves behind. Survivors include his sons: Alan (Jennifer) Kratochvil of Braceville and Brian Kratochvil of Coal City; step-children: Keith (Terri) Scerine, Kristy (Chip) Cerovac and Joe Vinyard; granddaughter, Brianna Kratochvil; grandson, Paul Wilczak; several step-grandchildren; his sister, Cathy (Henry) Kuchenbacher of Wilmington and numerous nieces and nephews, as well as cousins. Lynn was preceded in death by his parents Frank and Irene Kratochvil; wife Cathy (nee Skubic) on March 10, 2006, and his sister, Joanne Ulivi. Funeral services were Tuesday Aug. 25, 2026 at the funeral home with Deacon William Dunn from Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish presiding. Burial was in Braceville-Gardner Cemetery, where Lynn will be laid to rest with his late wife, Cathy. Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Lynn's memory to the Braceville-Gardner Cemetery Association, P.O. Box 246, Braceville, IL 60407. Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.ReevesFuneral.com to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Lynn's memorial page online through social media. Funeral services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory.

Judith Grygiel

Wilmington—Judith Grygiel, a woman who was truly beautiful inside and out, peacefully began her next journey on Aug. 15, 2026, at the age of 83. Born on Nov. 1, 1942, in Joliet, she was a deeply loving mother, a remarkably gifted artist, and a bright light to everyone who knew her. Judith approached life with an independent, hands-on spirit and a heart full of imagination. She loved taking on home improvement and DIY projects, finding pure joy in transforming spaces with her own two hands. Her incredible artistic talent shone brightly through her paintings and sketches, leaving a beautiful, lasting reflection of her soul. Her greatest joy was her family, and she loved nothing more than bringing everyone together. She was the heart of family gatherings, creating warmth and laughter through holiday celebrations, as well as joyful outdoor family picnics. Throughout her life, Judith found her greatest happiness in the simple, wonderful pleasures of the world. She loved the music she listened to, the pages of good



books, camping under the stars, and the thrill of catching a big fish. More than anything, she filled her children's lives with beautiful, unforgettable memories and a foundation of love that they will hold dear in their hearts forever. In keeping with her naturally generous heart and lifelong desire to help others, Judith made the beautiful, selfless decision to donate her body to medical science. Rather than a traditional funeral, Judith wished for her life to be honored with smiles and happy memories. A joyful celebration of her life will be scheduled at a later date, where family and friends can gather to share stories and celebrate the wonderful woman she was. She leaves behind a legacy of love in her children: Joseph Tafoya, Monica Grant, Marcie Tafoya, and Megan Stevens; her cherished grandchildren; and her dear brothers and sisters. She is reunited in peace with her parents, Leroy and Wilma (Mallott) Purdy, and her brother, Leroy Purdy, who preceded her in death.

New law will allow state to review insurance rate hikes

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

Gov. JB Pritzker signed legislation that will give the Illinois Department of Insurance authority to review and approve rate changes for homeowners and automobile policies. "It's not asking too much to say to insurance companies, if you're telling your customers that rate hikes are necessary, you should be able to prove why," Pritzker said at a bill signing ceremony in Chicago. Prior to the bill signings, Illinois was one of only two states, with Wyoming, that did not exercise regulatory control over insurance rates. The new laws, which take effect July 1, 2027, prohibit companies from charging "excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory" rates and prohibit them from shifting the cost of losses in other states onto Illinois consumers. The new laws come a little more than a year after State Farm announced it was raising homeowners insurance rates an average 27.2% statewide. They also come two years after Illinois motorists saw an average 18% hike in their auto rates, according to Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias. In both cases, insurance industry officials said the rate increases were necessary due to inflation, the rising cost of repairs and, in the case of homeowners insurance, the increasing frequency of extreme weather. In addition, State Farm recently noted that auto insurance rates have been

falling in Illinois and that it lowered its premiums by an average 15% in 2025. Insurance Department Director Ann Gillespie agreed there often are legitimate reasons for rate increases. But she said the new laws will help make sure that rate increases in the future are justified by reliable data. "While no state legislation can fully eliminate these impacts to insurance premiums, these bills today hold insurance companies accountable for addressing their cost increases by requiring rates to reflect Illinois-specific losses and considerations," she said. House Bill 4273, the homeowners insurance bill, requires companies to give their customers 60 days' notice before raising premiums more than 10%. It also requires them to use credible state-specific claims data to develop their rates when it is available, but companies will be able to supplement that data with national, regional or out-of-state data if needed to meet actuarial standards of credibility. Companies will still be able to charge new rates once they are filed with the Insurance Department. But the new law gives the department authority to review those rates and order rebates of any excess premiums collected if the rates are found to be excessive or unfairly discriminatory. Senate Bill 714, the auto insurance bill, requires companies to give customers 30 days' notice before raising premiums more than 10%. It also gives the department authority to review rates and order rebates if the rates are

found to be excessive or unfairly discriminatory. Giannoulias pushed for that bill, criticizing companies for basing rates on factors unrelated to a person's driving record, such as their credit score or ZIP code. But while those practices are not specifically prohibited in the final legislation, the new law does ban rates that are "unfairly discriminatory." Insurance industry organizations, however, remain opposed to the new laws. In a joint statement issued after the bill signing, the Illinois Insurance Association, the American Property Casualty Insurance Association and the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies warned the new laws will lead to higher costs and fewer choices in the insurance market because they do not address the economic realities behind premium increases. "Instead, the laws impose a fundamental shift in Illinois' regulatory environment, moving the state toward a more rigid rate approval system similar to struggling insurance markets like California," the organizations said. "This shift will make it harder for insurers to respond in real time to market conditions and adjust rates up or down based on actual claims experience." *Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.*

Good or bad? Concerns over bird feeders

Dear EarthTalk: How has the prevalence of bird feeders in the U.S. affected birds' evolution? Is putting up a bird feeder good or bad for ecosystems and the planet?

-Estelle Louis, Twin Falls, ID

EARTH TALK

Questions & Answers About Our Environment

In America, an estimated 50-60 million people maintain backyard bird feeders, a device often hung on yard trees or outdoor decks. Residents deploy these to intend to supply birds with the necessary foods.

Although many hang up these feeders in hopes of helping wildlife through harsh seasons, research suggests that this well-intentioned habit may reshape bird behavior beyond the intended benefits.

Feeders are one of the

most significant factors in modern bird evolution, contributing to new selective pressures found in urban and suburban environments. For example, the access point of many feeders has caused physical and genetic adaptations among many birds.

Studies suggest that some urban bird populations have been found with altered beak shapes and bolder foraging behaviors, a shift researchers attribute to bird feeders. Though this trait may help them exploit human-provided food, it can also significantly reduce their survival in the wild.

Many feeders also favor certain species over others and can cause population instability. Dominant, more adaptable birds such as jays or house finches can gain a competitive advantage over human-provided resources, often at the expense of shyer or less aggressive birds.

As a result, feeders can contribute to biodiversity loss and significantly marginalize quieter species,

contributing to unbalanced ecosystems across bird populations.

Environmentally, feeders create artificial dense areas that introduce several well-documented risks. Domestic cats, raccoons, and predatory birds hang around these food sources in addition to the targeted birds, often as unwanted guests that can threaten vulnerable bird populations.

In addition, illnesses such as avian influenza, salmonella, and conjunctivitis can spread more easily in these crowded spots. Excess seeds and droppings beneath feeders can contribute to localized nutrient pollution. Researcher Andrew Abraham, from Aarhus University in Denmark, notes that when "the nutrients in bird feed are washed into rivers...they may also exacerbate issues of eutrophication." (Eutrophication is an excessive growth of algae that is suffocating for all wildlife.)

That said, bird feeders should not be entirely abolished from backyards.

Indeed, they can provide a huge survival boost for bird populations after natural disasters, helping wildlife through tough winter storms, droughts, or other severe conditions.

Moreover, bird feeders can partake in citizen science, allowing scientists to track and monitor bird populations through local resident feeders.

The final verdict on bird feeder viability is complicated, but having attentive responsibility over feeders is one of the best ways to manage its benefits and consequences.

Observers should clean them and provide proper food to avoid disease, while also ensuring that they only supplement natural sources and not replace it. If you would like to learn more about how to eco-consciously set up a bird feeder, consider contacting local wildlife centers or Audubon Society chapters near you.

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



Courtesy photo

YOU MAY NOT be doing birds a favor giving them access to your bird feeder.

Illinois State Police seeks public assistance on anniversary of Tammy Zywicki murder

The Illinois State Police (ISP) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have a new lead regarding the kidnapping and murder of Tammy J. Zywicki. Aug. 23, 2026 marked the 34th anniversary of Tammy's disappearance.

Her case remains active as ISP and FBI continue exploring new leads, examining 200 pieces of evidence, and retesting items with modern DNA technology.

Tammy was reportedly last seen with her car on Interstate 80 at mile marker 83 in LaSalle County, IL between 3:10 and 4:00 p.m. on Aug. 23, 1992. She left Evanston, IL for college in Grinnell, IA where she was expected to arrive that evening. Later that day, Tammy's car, a 1985 White Pontiac T1000, was found by an ISP Trooper and marked as being abandoned. On August 24, 1992, ISP towed the vehicle.

That same evening,



TAMMY ZYWICKI was last seen Aug. 23, 1992 while driving Interstate 80 on her way to college.

Tammy's mother contacted ISP and advised that her daughter had not arrived at college. On September 1, 1992, Tammy's body was found along Interstate 44 in rural Lawrence County, MO, which is located between Joplin and Springfield, MO.

She had been stabbed

to death. It was also reported that a semi-truck was seen near Tammy's vehicle during this time period. The truck driver was described as a white male between 35 and 40 years old, over six feet tall, with dark, bushy hair.

Special agents are looking for information about a person who may have a connection with the unknown truck driver. Theresa "Teri" Belenske (maiden name Theresa Vega) was known to hitch hike and may have been traveling with the unknown suspect at some point prior to Tammy's death. Belenske would have been 32 years old at the time of Tammy's death. She passed away in 2014 at the age of 54.

Belenske is not a suspect, but a person of interest. Special agents are looking for information about Belenske from the late 1980's through the mid 1990's. Belenske has ties to cities in California, including Oceanside, Vista, Pomona, San Bernadino, and Fontana.

Anyone with information about Tammy's killing, or Belenske and who she traveled with during the late 1980's and early 1990's, can leave a crime tip at our ISP Investigative Tips [4] page or call 1-800-CALL-FBI.

Callers can remain anonymous.

The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$50,000 for information leading to the



THERESA "TERI" BELENKE

identification of the individual or individuals responsible for this crime.

Below are photos of Tammy and some of her personal property known to be missing, along with a photo of Belenske taken in 2009, as well as an AI generated image of what she may have looked like in 1992.

Missing items include a Cannon 35mm camera and a Lorus brand musical wristwatch, which played the tune "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head." Also taken was a red and white soccer patch monogrammed with "St. Giles Soccer Club, Greenville, SC."

To hear more about the latest in the investigation, listen to the Illinois State Police Podcast, which can be found on many streaming platforms. <https://lnk.bio/illinois-statepolicepodcast>.



TAMMY ZYWICKI was reportedly last seen with her car on Interstate 80 at mile marker 83 in LaSalle County, IL between 3:10 and 4:00 p.m. on Aug. 23, 1992.

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Wilmington EST 1836
 THE ISLAND CITY ILLINOIS

Inspector General deems another sexual harassment allegation as unfounded

Yet another sexual harassment allegation has been made against an Illinois House Democrat. But this time, the House Speaker's operation is fully supporting its incumbent.

Rep. Murri Briel's former deputy chief of staff Laura Jackson claims that, among other things, Briel (D-Ottawa) sexually harassed her, supplied "unlimited" amounts of Adderall to her and the campaign staff and gave "bonuses in marijuana," Jackson said she ultimately had a three-hour meeting with the Legislative Inspector General.



Rich Miller

Before we go any further, you should know that Jackson made her claims in a 44-minute video released by Linc Strategy, a Republican consulting group that has worked for Rep. Briel's Republican general election opponent Liz Bishop.

The interview was conducted by Marjorie Kline of Wilson Grand Communications, a national Republican advertising agency.

A district office employee in former Rep. Harry Benton's office claimed she resigned after repeated sexual harassment by Benton in the spring of 2023. His ultimate resignation this summer set off a firestorm of criticism against House Speaker Chris Welch for waiting so long to do anything, which has metastasized into criticism of Welch's service as House Speaker.

Ironically, a Benton staffer reached out to Benton's Republican opponent around the time of her fellow staffer's resignation, saying via text that Benton "needs to go." A meeting never took place, however, and that staffer, Jessica Dixon Heitman, eventually replaced Benton in the House.

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Ironically, a Benton staffer reached out to Benton's Republican opponent around the time of her fellow staffer's resignation, saying via text that Benton "needs to go." A meeting never took place, however, and that staffer, Jessica Dixon Heitman, eventually replaced Benton in the House.

According to Jackson, "Rep. Briel almost daily told me that I needed to take an older woman lover," telling the Republican consultant Kline it was "difficult to focus on tasks while knowing that my boss has these feelings that she's openly sharing."

"It was probably every day that I talked to her there was something about me that was sexualized, to the point that on the night of inauguration, I stood in front of her with tears in my eyes and said that I wish that she would see me as something more than just my looks, than just physically," Jackson said during the GOP interview.

"During the campaign, there was a lot of extreme Adderall use," Jackson claimed in the Republican video. "I take accountability on my part for taking it, but there was also a supply of unlimited Adderall to keep us going through that campaign," she told Kline, referencing Rep. Briel's first Illinois House campaign in 2024.

Briel won by a slim margin of just 595 votes in 2024. Jackson told Kline that the Adderall kept coming while votes were being counted. "After that, Rep. Briel never gave me another Adderall at all, which made it very difficult for me because, yes, I was partaking."

Jackson also claimed that Briel "would give bonuses in marijuana, up to two ounces that she would drive back from Michigan."

Rep. Briel released a statement a day later claiming these were all disproven allegations.

"The statements in the video produced by her MAGA political operatives were previously taken to the Legislative Inspector General in 2025 and were found to be without merit. I am calling for the immediate release of the Legislative Inspector General's report on this matter," Briel said.

Legislative Inspector General Michael McCuskey told the Sun-Times last week that he deemed Jackson's complaint unfounded a month after she filed it in April of last year.

Jackson has a different version of events. "[The LIG office] just told me

that I was an at-will employee and that there wasn't really anything that they could do for me," she told my colleague Isabel Miller last week, adding, "I was never told that anything was unfounded or anything like that. I was just told the at-will employee part."

The "unfounded" declaration gives the House Democrats license to move full speed ahead. The Sun-Times quoted the executive director of the House Democrats' political operation as saying, "We will not allow a misleading political attack to distort Rep. Briel's record or diminish our commitment to the values she has consistently fought for."

However, the Republican Bishop's campaign spokesperson Steven Shearer made it clear that the LIG's decision will not be accepted as the final say. "It should not be up to one man to be the cross-examiner, the judge, the jury," Shearer said of the inspector general.

"We're going to let the voters be the jury on this, and they can decide how credible it is that Rep. Briel hired her twice, hired her on her campaign and then hired her as the chief of staff in her legislative office."

If the House Republicans can raise the money, this could be one of the hottest legislative races of the fall campaign.

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

Deadline is Aug. 29 Mazonia-Braidwood State Fish and Wildlife Areas to host youth firearm deer hunt

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources invites youth hunters to participate in the youth firearm deer hunt Oct. 10-12 at Mazonia-Braidwood State Fish and Wildlife Area in

Braceville. To participate, applicants must mail a letter with the hunter's and guardian's names, address, email address and phone number to the site superintendent at Mazonia State

Fish and Wildlife Area, P.O. Box 126, Braceville IL 60407. The deadline to apply is Aug. 29.

A random drawing will be held, and successful applicants will be contacted and provided with site rules, regulations and maps. Participants will be required to purchase a youth firearm deer permit from an over-the-counter vendor.

The youth firearm deer hunting season is open only to hunters who have not reached their 18th birthday by Oct. 10, the opening day of the 2026 season. For more information, call the site office at 815-237-0063.

Seated Yoga at the Forest Preserve

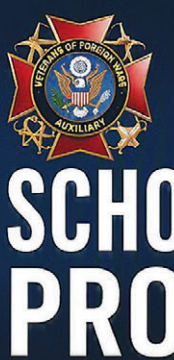
The Forest Preserve of Will County is hosting Seated Yoga and Seasonal Sights on Sunday, Sept. 13 from 11 a.m. to noon at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

Take part in a 30- to 35-minute all-levels seated yoga session followed by a 25- to 30-minute exploration of the natural world. Bring water and wear comfortable clothing. Ages 12 or older; free. Register by Sept. 12.

VFW AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS

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 ★ 2026-2027 ★

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LEARN MORE
 Barbara Sweger
 Department Scholarship Chairman
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 VFW Auxiliary Department of Illinois

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SBA offers relief to those affected by severe storms

The U.S. Small Business Administration announced the availability of low interest federal disaster loans for Illinois small businesses, private nonprofit organizations, and residents affected by severe storms occurring July 27.

The SBA issued a disaster declaration in response to a request received from Governor JB Pritzker on Aug. 17.

The declaration covers Illinois counties of Grundy, Kankakee, Will and four others, which are eligible for both physical damage loans and Economic Injury Disaster Loans from SBA.

Businesses and private nonprofits are eligible to apply for business physical disaster loans and may borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace disaster-damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory, and other business

assets.

Homeowners and renters are eligible to apply for home and personal property loans and may borrow up to \$100,000 to replace or repair personal property, such as clothing, furniture, cars, and appliances. Homeowners may apply for up to \$500,000 to replace or repair their primary residence.

Applicants may also be eligible for a loan increase of up to 20% of their physical damage, as verified by the SBA, for mitigation purposes. Eligible mitigation improvements include strengthening structures to protect against high wind damage, upgrading to wind rated garage doors, and installing a safe room or storm shelter to help protect property and occupants from future damage.

"When disasters strike, SBA's Disaster

Loan Outreach Centers play a vital role in helping small businesses and their communities recover," said Chris Stallings, Associate Administrator of the Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience at SBA. "At these centers, SBA specialists assist business owners and residents with disaster loan applications and provide information on the full range of recovery programs available."

The SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program is available to eligible small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, and private nonprofits — including faith-based organizations — impacted by financial losses directly related to this disaster. The SBA is unable to provide disaster loans to agricultural producers, farmers, or ranchers, except for aquaculture enterprises.

Interest rates are as low as 4% for businesses, 3.625% for private nonprofits, and 2.875% for homeowners and renters, with terms up to 30 years. Interest does not begin to accrue, and payments are not due until 12 months from the date of the first loan disbursement. The SBA determines eligibility and sets loan amounts and terms based on each applicant's financial condition.

SBA customer service representatives are on hand at the Disaster Loan Outreach Centers in Will County to answer questions about SBA's disaster loan program, explain the application process, and help individuals complete their application. Schedule an in-person appointment in advance at appointment.sba.gov.

CLASSIFIEDS

CLASSIFIED DEADLINES

Pre-payment required for all classified ads unless customer has a pre established business account

Deadlines

Classified Ads & Classified Display Ads
Fridays - 5 p.m.

The Free Press Newspapers will be responsible for the first incorrect insertion, and its liabilities shall be limited to the price on one insertion. The Free Press Newspapers reserves the right to classify correctly, edit, reject or cancel any advertisement at any time in accordance with its policy. All ads must be checked for errors the first week of publication by the advertiser.

Phone (815) 476-7966 or (815) 634-0315 for details.

Cost

Line Ads are up to 30 words (20¢ for each word over 30)
1 wk. - \$17; 2 wks. - \$21;
3 wks. - \$25; 4 wks. - \$29*
\$1.00 Extra per line for bold or caps on classified
*plus .0399% with credit card



The Braidwood Journal — The Coal City Courant — The Free Press Advocate



HELP WANTED

RELIABLE FARM WORKER needed full-time. Duties include cutting grass, small engine maintenance and repair, dog training and more. Year-round position pays hourly wage. Wilmington. Call 630-399-4982. ch34-36

LOST & FOUND

Have you found a lost pet or lost a pet in Will County? Please call Will County Animal Control. We may have your pet. We want to reunite your family, 815-462-5633.

PETS

Large Selection of Dog and Cat Food, treats, accessories, health aids, clothing, Birthday treats, wall art, jewelry, gifts, greeting cards and Home of Fritters for Critters Pet Treats. New! Brew and Chew Dog Treats. Trinity Barkery 240 W. Baltimore Wilmington., IL 60481 815-476-5104 slewis@trinityservices.org.

SERVICE & REPAIRS

Mike Collins Roofing, re-shingles and gutter cleaning, aluminum gutter screen, no repair to small or too big. Free roof inspection. Low prices. Lic #104.007296 Ask for Mike at 815-730-1303.

Bubbles Cleaning Service

Dawn Boardman Business and Home Cleaning Service. Weekly, bi-weekly, monthly. Many references available. Please leave message 815-661-6180.

Run a classified ad and get results!

HELP WANTED HELP WANTED HELP WANTED

HELP WANTED

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE, ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE & PAYROLL CLERK

CITY OF BRAIDWOOD, ILLINOIS is seeking a dependable and detail-oriented individual for a full-time union position in the Finance Department. This position will report to the City Clerk, City Administrator and Finance Commissioner.

Responsibilities include accounts payable and receivable, invoice and payment processing, payroll, deposits, account reconciliations, financial recordkeeping, and assistance with audits and financial reporting. The position will also provide customer service to residents, employees, and vendors. Responsible for other tasks assigned.

Qualifications: High school diploma or equivalent required.

Associate's or Higher in Accounting, Finance or Business preferred. Previous accounting, bookkeeping, accounts payable/receivable, or payroll experience required. Municipal or governmental accounting experience preferred. Strong computer, Excel, organizational, communication, and math skills required. Must be able to maintain confidentiality and meet deadlines.

Pay Scale: \$20.75-22.04

Benefits: Insurance, PTO, and IMRF

Applications can be found on the city website, or you may get a paper copy at City Hall. Submit resume and completed application to:

CITY OF BRAIDWOOD

Attn: Finance Department

141 W. Main Street

Braidwood, IL 60408

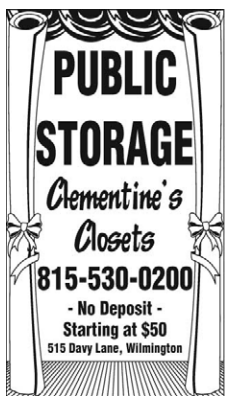
ldixon@braidwood.gov

www.braidwood.gov

Application Deadline: September 4, 2026

CITY OF BRAIDWOOD IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

STORAGE



WANTED

WANTED SCRAP METAL

- Farm Machinery
- Garden Tractors
- Snowmobiles
- Appliances
- Anything Metal

**Free pickup
7 days
815-210-8819**

Resources available for food, meals

CLA Food Pantry. Christian Life Assembly, 2960 E Division St Diamond IL. Available Tuesday 2:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Wednesday 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Friday 9:00 a.m. to noon. By appointment only 815-578-5441.

Braidwood Food Pantry at Community Care Center. Open Tuesdays 8 to 11:45 a.m. 112 S. Center Street, Braidwood. Info: 815-325-0779

Ignite Christian Church, 1180 W 1st St. Braidwood. Micro-pantry open 24 hours front of church Info: (815)-390-5040

Top Fuel Saloon Food Pantry. Open Fridays from 1 to 2 p.m. 275 S. Hickory St., Braidwood.

Secret Pantry, for hours and location see: The Original Secret Pantry Facebook page

Coal City Food Pantry at Coal City United Methodist Church. (Use south entrance) Closed all Federal holidays. Open Mondays 9-11 a.m. and

Thursdays 1-3 p.m. 6805 E. McArdle Road, Coal City. Information: 815-216-3288.

We Care of Grundy County Food Pantry. Office Hours: Mon.-Wed. and Fri.: 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1:00-4:00 p.m. Pantry Hours: Monday-Friday 1:00-3:00 by appointment. Please call to schedule your time to come 815-942-6389. 530 Bedford Rd., Morris.

Kuzma Care Cottage, food pantry. 635 S. Main Street, Wilmington. Hours: M-F 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. and the 2nd Saturday of each month, 8-11 a.m. 815-476-2030

Local Meals:

St. Vincent Table Hot Meals. Coordinators Cindi Grove 815-735-1432 and

Laura Marizza 815-325-8605. Hours for pickup for shut ins 4:00-4:30 p.m. Dine in hours 4:30 until 5:30 p.m.

From August through October meals will be distributed at Immaculate Conception, 220 S. School St., Braidwood; Nov. - Assumption of the BVM, 180 S. Kankakee St., Coal City. Dec. through Feb. - Closed and will resume in March, 2027.

If you would like to help with this ministry or know of anyone in need of meals, please contact our coordinators for more information.

We are always looking for more churches or organizations to help.

Cieszkiewicz named to president's list

Camdyn Cieszkiewicz, of Wilmington, was named to University of Bridgeport's Spring 2026 President's List.

To be named to the President's List, a student must maintain a term grade point average of 3.7 or higher.

Gas at highest level ever recorded this late

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have risen 7.6 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$4.36/g Monday, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Prices in Illinois are 10.7 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 97.5 cents per gallon higher than a year ago.

That means saying farewell to gas under \$4/g, with Mohsen in Wilmington charging \$4.06/g (cash), all the way up to \$4.19/g (cash) at BP.

In Braidwood, expect to pay from \$4.29/g at Casey's to \$4.49/g at BP.

Coal City gas runs the gamut from \$4.29/g at BP up to \$4.49/g at other nearby stations.

Traveling to Morris or Bourbonnais won't save you much, with gas ranging from \$4.07/g at Pilot to

\$4.39/g at Shell in Morris.

Bourbonnais prices are unusually high with gas ranging from \$4.24/g at Gulf to \$4.29/g at Kroger.

"Average gasoline prices moved higher in the majority of states over the last week, with fewer than 10 states seeing declines, while diesel surged nearly 17 cents per gallon nationally, leaving it less than 25 cents away from an all-time record high," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

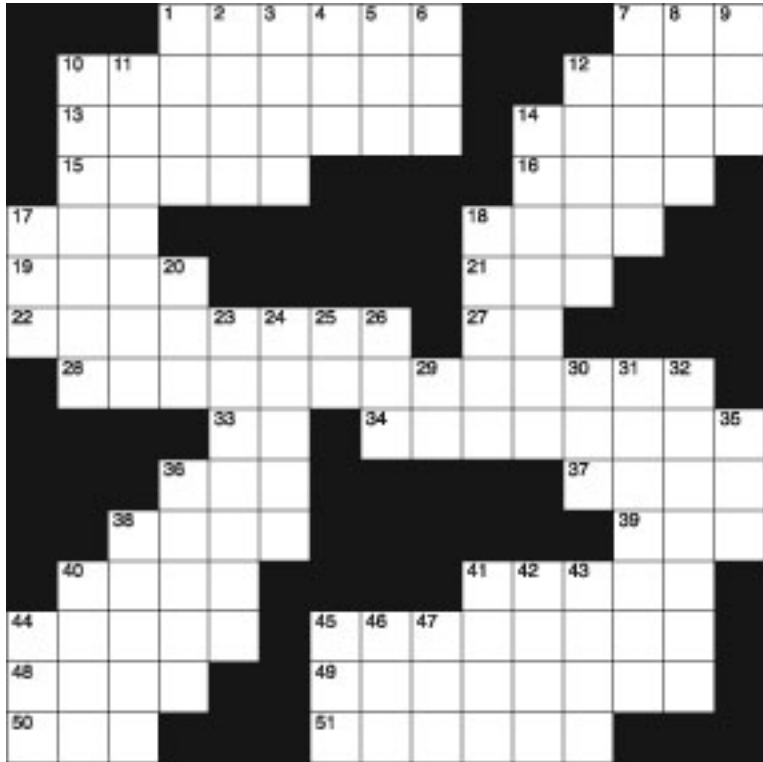
"Gasoline, while not at all-time records, is at its highest level ever recorded this late in the calendar year, meaning Americans could for the first time ever see a national average price of gasoline above \$4 per gallon on Labor Day — eclipsing the previous record of \$3.83 per gallon

set in 2012.

"While some oil shipments are apparently getting through the Strait of Hormuz, the dominant force propping up both gasoline and diesel prices is increasingly the growing loss of Russian refinery capacity, as continued Ukrainian attacks knock more facilities offline and constrain the global supply of refined fuels. Until that refining supply picture improves, both gasoline and diesel prices face continued upward pressure."

The lowest price in the state yesterday was \$3.75/g while the highest was \$5.69/g.

The national average price of diesel has increased 16.6 cents compared to a week ago and stands at \$5.584 per gallon.

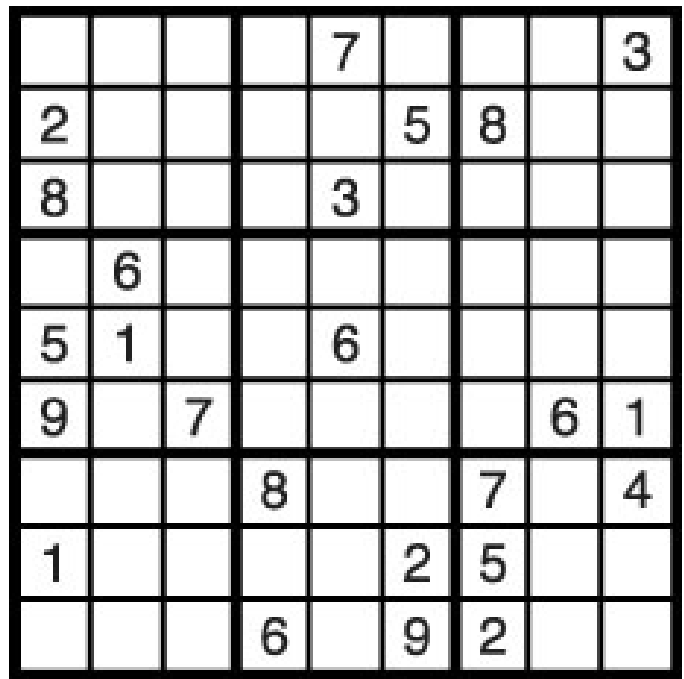


CLUES ACROSS

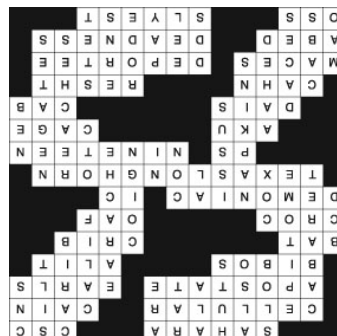
1. A vast desert in Africa
7. Reciprocal of a sine
10. Type of phone
12. Biblical figure
13. One who renounces a religious belief
14. Warren and Monroe are two
15. Wild ox
16. Dismounted a horse
17. Cave dweller
18. Where infants sleep

CLUES DOWN

1. Slovenly person
2. In addition
3. Hovels
4. Pie ___ mode
5. Subway rodent
6. They ___
7. Indigenous S. American people
8. Fine sand
9. Central nervous system
10. Nightclub entertainment
11. The perfect example of something
12. Supreme Islamic leader
14. Pain
17. Binary-coded decimal
18. Projecting corner of an angle
20. "Succession" actor Brian
23. Dinner table decor
24. Ancient settlement in modern Turkey
25. You can call Paul Simon this
26. Opposite of a pro
29. Atomic #28
30. Type of drug (abbr.)
31. Arrives at
32. Nullifies
35. Bird's beak
36. Partner to "oohed"
38. Ray-finned fishes
40. Taxis
41. Sat on and controlled
42. Sea eagles
43. Remain as-is
44. Chinese revolutionary
45. Tooth caregiver
46. Snake-like fish
47. Compensate



Level: Intermediate



COALER SPORTS



Photo by Amy Walker

TACKLE BY COALERS! Coalers Kole Carpenter (7) and Keaton Berta (16) make a stop on the Pontiac ball carrier on Friday.



Photo by Amy Walker

COALER LOGAN NATYSHOK gets a first down for Coal City during Friday's game against Pontiac. Natyshok ran for a total of 173 yards with four touchdowns.

Coalers too much for Pontiac in opener

BY JIM SHELDON
SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

Good things come to those who wait.

After lightning and rain forced Friday's opening game in Pontiac to resume Saturday at 11, the Coal City football team picked up where they left off some 15 hours earlier as they scored 27 points in a span of 13 minutes and rolled to a 40-6 win.

"Obviously, you know, not ideal with the weather there. When you have a delay like that, you wonder how they're going to come back the next day," said head coach Francis Loughran.

"The guys did a great job of being focused and had a lot of energy which showed in the strong start we had with our offense coming out and scoring first drive. I thought our defense was able to make some adjustments that we

needed to make after the initial start to the game."

The game's opening possession resulted in a Connor Henline interception, but that's the only time the Coaler offense would be denied.

Aiden Scrogam did the damage on Friday as he recorded a pair of touchdown receptions of 34 and 20 yards respectively. The senior led all pass catchers with 74 yards on four receptions and added three carries for 18 yards.

Braden Walker was right behind him with four catches for 72 yards.

"They are both great receivers who put in a lot of work this offseason.

They have good footwork and hands so I knew they would get themselves open and I just had to get them the ball and let them do the rest of the work," said Henline.

The game was halted at the 5:02 mark of the sec-

ond quarter with the Coalers leading 13-0.

Saturday belonged to Logan Natyshok as the senior scored four touchdowns. His four yard run with 2:02 left in the half gave Coal City a 19-0 half-time advantage.

The senior made his presence felt on the defensive side as well as he recorded an interception to open the second half and capped the drive with a 14-yard scamper.

Cooper Morris then picked off a pass and Natyshok plowed in from a yard out.

With 1:10 left in the third, Natyshok's 16-yard score resulted in a running clock. He finished with 23 carries for 173 yards and added a 21-yard catch.

"I thought Natyshok did a great job running the ball. He was able to move the sticks when we needed to and then also still has that big play ability," said

Loughran.

"Henline did a great job leading the offense. He made some great decisions, some very good throws and was really efficient. He was able to spread the ball around to Scrogam, Natyshok, Meents and Walker. It was a great job on his part."

Pontiac avoided the shutout with a short touchdown run with two minutes left.

"It was definitely a little weird having the game postponed, but we just tried to stay focused and be ready for today," said Henline.

"We had to switch up our routine a little, but once we got back out there, it was just about playing our game."

The senior signal caller finished 11-for-16 passing for 174 yards.

Meents had two carries for 10 yards, two catches for seven yards and was a factor on special teams with some strong returns.

Defensively, Tyler Phillips had a huge game with 14 total tackles.

Theo Fritz added seven stops and A.J. McGarvey made five. Meents, Morris and Kole Carpenter all recorded four and Tyce Farrell, Keaton Berta,

Scrogam and Emmett Easton all had three.

Bobby Rodriguez, Natyshok, Ryker Long and Coleman Slush all added two and also in on a stop were Ty Christopher and Cayden Winke.

The Coalers recorded 11 tackles for loss and held Pontiac to 137 total yards and only 15 on the ground.

"We knew that Pontiac wanted to establish the run so that was a point of emphasis for us. Up front, Easton, Berta, Christopher and McGarvey really helped out our linebackers by controlling the line of scrimmage, making it difficult for them to get anything going," said



Photo by Amy Walker

YARD GAINER! Coaler Aiden Scrogam runs with the ball against Pontiac. Scrogam had four catches for a total of 74 yards and two touchdowns.

Loughran.

"Guys like Phillips, Fritz and Scrogam were able to rack up some tackles and that effort starts upfront."

They will face a difficult test next week when they welcome Morris to town. Morris has had the Coalers number in recent years, outscoring them 136-28 in the last four meetings.

"We know Morris is gonna be a tough team. We just have to have a good week of practice, clean up the little mistakes from this game and come in prepared," said Henline.

"If we stay focused and play our game, we are going to have ourselves a great game."

Morris is coming off a 56-16 win over Lemont where quarterback Marion

Persich accounted for 287 total yards (176 rushing) and five total touchdowns.

"Keeping him in the pocket is going to be key. He's a dynamic player for a reason and has some weapons in running back Mick Smith and receiver R.J. Kennedy," said Loughran.

"I'm looking for us to be aggressive, physical and play assignment football. Limiting big plays defensively again is going to be key."

Offensively, we've shown that we're able to spread the ball around. This will be another big game for our offensive line, providing protection in the passing game and also getting off the ball and giving our running backs room to work."



Photo by Amy Walker

COALER THEO FRITZ kicks off the season in Pontiac on Friday. Coal City will host Morris this week.

CCMS softball has a busy week

The Coal City eighth-grade softball team packed four games into four days last week, picking up a pair of convincing victories while battling through two losses to move to 2-5 overall.

The Coalers opened the week in impressive fashion Monday, jumping on Reed-Custer early and cruising to a 16-5 victory.

Coal City scored six runs in the first inning and four more in the second to quickly build a 10-0 advantage. The Coalers finished with nine hits and drew 10 walks while committing no errors.

K. Cuddy led the offense by going 3-for-4 with four RBIs, while R. Aldridge went 2-for-3, drove in four runs and scored twice. H. Caise added two hits and two RBIs, while A. Hines scored three times. H. Fisher also crossed the plate three times and stole three bases.

Caise earned the win in the circle, allowing five runs on seven hits over

four innings while striking out seven and walking just one. Cuddy pitched a scoreless final inning.

Coal City faced Manteno the following day and fell 12-6 despite staying within striking distance for much of the game.

Manteno built a 4-0 advantage before the Coalers erupted for four runs in the bottom of the fourth to tie the game. Manteno answered with two runs in both the fifth and seventh innings and then broke the game open with a six-run seventh. Coal City finished with six hits but was hurt by five errors.

Aldridge provided the biggest hit for Coal City with a home run and finished with an RBI. O. Vironda drove in two runs, while E. Hall doubled and L. Harding contributed an RBI single.

The Coalers came close to pulling off a late comeback Wednesday at Channahon before falling 7-6.

Coal City trailed 2-0

through four innings before scoring three runs in the fifth to take a 3-2 lead. Channahon regained the advantage with two runs in the sixth, but the Coalers weren't finished.

Down 4-3 entering the seventh, Coal City pushed three runs across to grab a 6-4 lead. Channahon answered with three runs in the bottom half to walk off with the 7-6 victory.

Cuddy went 2-for-3 with two runs scored and an RBI, while Aldridge had two hits and drove in two. C. Lehnus contributed a hit and an RBI, and the Coalers drew seven walks while collecting six hits.

Caise went the distance in the circle, giving up 11 hits and seven runs, five earned, while walking two.

Coal City finished the four-game stretch on a high note Thursday, Aug. 20, overwhelming Morris 12-2.

The Coalers wasted no time taking control, scoring six runs in the first, four in the second and two in

the third for a 12-1 advantage. The game ended after five innings with Coal City collecting five hits and committing two errors.

Vironda led the offense, going 2-for-3 with three RBIs and three runs scored. She also doubled and stole two bases. K. Funes doubled and drove in three runs, while R. Padavano had a hit and two RBIs. E. Bakii added a hit and an RBI.

Padavano was strong in the circle, striking out eight while allowing five hits and two runs, only one earned, in 3 2/3 innings. E. Hall finished the game with a scoreless inning, allowing no hits and striking out one.

The 2-2 week featured plenty of offense from the young Coalers, who scored 40 runs over the four-game stretch. Their two victories came by a combined 21 runs, while the one-run loss at Channahon showed they can battle back late in close games.

CC Golf off to good start

The Coal City boys golf team put together a strong week on the links, highlighted by a pair of standout performances from junior Jaxon Duke.

Duke capped the week by firing a career-best 37 as the Coalers defeated both Pontiac and Lisle in a three-team meet at Cinder Ridge.

Coal City posted a team score of 173 to comfortably finish ahead of Pontiac at 182 and Lisle at 247.

Duke earned medalist honors with his 37, three strokes better than teammate Frankie Ponio, who turned in a 40 to give the Coalers the top two individual scores of the meet. Pontiac's Guy Pierce was third overall with a 42.

The Coalers showed their depth behind Duke and Ponio. Kory Lovell, Reed Sulzberger and McKale Perino each carded a 48, while Trevor Walker

finished one stroke back with a 49.

Duke's career round came after he led the Coalers earlier in the week at the Bill Breeden Invite at the Kankakee Elks Golf Course.

Coal City finished the tournament with a four-player team score of 370. Duke paced the Coalers with an 86, shooting a 42 on the front nine and 44 on the back.

Sulzberger followed with a 93 and Walker was right behind with a 94. Perino and Lovell each shot 97, while Ponio finished with a 98. Duke, Sulzberger, Walker and Perino accounted for Coal City's four scoring rounds and the 370 team total.

The two outings showed encouraging balance for the Coalers, with several golfers contributing during the week and Duke setting the pace.