

# COAL CITY COURANT.com

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2025 | A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER • (815) 634-0315



Coal City School District photo  
COAL CITY HIGH SCHOOL hosted Meet the Coalers Night on Friday, Aug. 22. The event served to introduce the school's varsity athletes from all fall sports —boys and girls golf, boys soccer, girls tennis, volleyball, football, cheer team and dance team. The evening started with a soccer scrimmage and finished with scrimmages by both the sophomore and varsity football teams. The evening also provided Coaler fans with an opportunity to update their Coaler apparel and support local groups and businesses who were on hand with refreshments.



CONNOR HENLINE (13), a Coal City junior, rolls out while playing quarterback during Friday's introduction of the Coaler football team.

## Getting fired up for those Friday Night Lights



Coal City School District photo  
CHEERING ON THE Coalers this season are Evelyn Wills and Kenzi Baldauf.

## Which Fall Fest button will win you \$\$\$\$?

Kinsley - 1st Grade



Bella - 4th Grade



Konner - 10th Grade



Lilly - 3rd Grade



Lily - 6th Grade



The Coaler Drive Festival and Events Committee has launched the sale of the commemorative 2025 Fall Fest Buttons. These five uniquely designed buttons are only \$1.00 and proceeds will be used to fund future Coaler Drive community events.

Each creative button was selected from Coal City student submissions and celebrates their creativity and connection to this community event.

There will be five winning button numbers drawn and prizes are: first place - \$250 cash, second place - \$100 cash, third place - \$50 cash, fourth and fifth place - gift basket from local businesses.

The drawing for winners will be in front of Babe's Tap and Grill at 5 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 13. Winners need not be present at drawing but encouraged to be.

Five button numbers will be drawn and announced. Announcements will be posted on the Coaler drive facebook page, Village of Coal City Facebook page and printed in the Coal City Courant.

Winners must have their buttons with them to claim prize. If prizes are not claimed immediately, then they can be picked up at the village hall during normal business hours.

All winning button numbers have until Friday, Sept. 19 at 5 p.m. to claim their prize. If any prizes are not claimed by deadline, new numbers for those prizes will be drawn on Sept. 22, posted, and must be claimed no later than Sept. 26 at 5 p.m.

Buttons are \$1 each and can be purchased at the Coal City Library, the Village Hall, The Cove, Coal City Nutrition, Bob's Advanced Auto & Tire, Inc. Lori Bonarek Realty, Old National Bank - Coal City, Bank of Pontiac - Coal City, Sweet Treats & Tasty Eats, and Coal City Liquors.

THE FIVE WINNING designs are being used by the Coaler Drive Festival and Events Committee in a fundraising effort as they sell buttons as part of the 2025 Fall Fest. Local students submitted their creative artwork which are now made into \$1 buttons with a number eligible for one of five prizes.



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Berkot's Rotini Salad 1.5 LB





Coal City School District photos

OVER 120 COALERS stopped by the Coal City Theatre Department/Drama Club table at Club Coaler Day to see what theatre is all about. The students learned about the many opportunities available to Drama Club members including the upcoming New York City Theatre Experience, auditions for school plays and musicals, master classes and trips to see performances around the Chicago area. Drama Club officers [from left]: Brody D'Orazio, Maxx Kramer, Gavin Clubb and Julian Micetich talk to prospective members.



DANCE TEAM MEMBERS [from left]: Anastasia Papach and Abby Kodat provided information on Coal City High School's new Dance Team to students who stopped by their table at Club Coaler Day.



STUDENTS ENROLLED IN Coal City School District music programs have the opportunity to join the Music Honor Society. Sharing details with fellow students were [from left]: Jackson Hollis, Caroline Childers and Jaiden Leman.

## Club Coaler Day shows all CCHS has to offer

Coal City High School hosted its annual Club Coaler Day. The event provided students with an opportunity to learn about the various clubs, organizations and activities available to them.

There are over 35 extracurricular activities for students including pickleball and ping pong club, to student council and speech.



Coal City School photo

EVERYONE HAS THE power to make a difference, that was part of the message speaker and author Terrence Talley had for students at Coal City High School. Talley spoke to students at both Coal City High School and Middle School on Aug. 21.

## The power to make a difference

"Don't give up." That was the message shared with Coal City High School students by speaker and author Terrence Talley, whose inspiring words have reached more than 20,000 students nationwide.

With lots of energy, music and dancing, Talley reminded students that everyone has the power to make a difference. Drawing from his own experiences,

Talley spoke about the challenges facing today's teens, reassuring them that they are not alone.

His message was clear—students are seen and cared for—and when difficult times come, don't give up—because someone will always be there to stand with them.

Talley's Aug. 21 visit to Coal City also included an address at Coal City Middle School.



COAL CITY HIGH School senior Cade Poyner shared the benefits of being a member of the Future Business Leaders of America [FBLA] with prospective members. FBLA is the largest student business, career and technical organization in the world. Members have the ability to participate in local projects like Haunted Hallways, attend leadership seminars and conferences, and compete in state and national events.

Village of Coal City to host public hearing to review Parks Facilities Comprehensive Plan

### LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
VILLAGE OF COAL CITY  
PARKS UPDATE & OSLAD GRANT  
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Village of Coal City Parks Board will conduct a public hearing on September 4, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., at the Coal City United Methodist Church, 6805 E McArdle Rd, Coal City, IL, to review the Parks Facilities Comprehensive Plan and the improvements to be included within the 2025 OSLAD Grant Submittal. The Village along with Coaler DRIVE volunteers have directed professional staff as to the needs and functions required for park improvements within the village; this input has focused the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development grant project to be improvements to the undeveloped village property located at Hunters Run & Marguerite.

At the public hearing, staff will receive testimony and allow those in attendance to discuss park ideas, see park concepts, and select park amenities.

Published in the Coal City Courant on August 27, 2025.



Coal City School photo

COAL CITY HIGH School PATH instructor Mr. Kinder showed off his dance moves as part of the Terrence Talley motivational assembly at Coal City High School.

Attorney Meents files Gonzalez 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 RAMON COLON GONZALEZ, Deceased;  
No. 2025 PR 41

#### CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Ramon Colon Gonzalez, Letters Testamentary as Independent Executor were issued on August 5, 2025, to Paul D. Gonzalez, whose address is 719 Casey Drive, Minooka, Illinois 60447; whose attorney is Meents Law, P.C., 25158 W. 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, Morris, Illinois 60450; or with the representative, or both, on or before February 23, 2026, 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 exemptions. 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/faq/gethelp.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.illinoislegallaid.org](http://www.illinoislegallaid.org).

Paul D. Gonzalez  
Independent Executor of the Estate of Ramon Colon Gonzalez, Deceased  
Frank J. Meents  
Meents Law, P.C.  
25158 West Eames Street, Unit A  
Channahon, Illinois 60410  
Telephone: (815) 534-9515  
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Published in the Coal City Courant on Wednesday, Aug. 20, 27 and Sept. 3, 2025.

Attorney Meents files Gonzalez 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 DIANE GONZALEZ, Deceased;  
No. 2025 PR 40

#### CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Diane Gonzalez, Letters Testamentary as Independent Executor was issued on August 5, 2025, to Paul D. Gonzalez, whose address is 719 Casey Drive, Minooka, Illinois 60447; whose attorney is Meents Law, P.C., 25158 W. 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, Morris, Illinois 60450; or with the representative, or both, on or before February 23, 2026, 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 exemptions. 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/faq/gethelp.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.illinoislegallaid.org](http://www.illinoislegallaid.org).

Paul D. Gonzalez  
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NEED EVENT PUBLICITY?  
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or call 815-634-0315

Attorney Frobish files adoption petition

### PUBLIC NOTICE

#### ADOPTION NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS )  
 ) SS.  
GRUNDY COUNTY )  
CIRCUIT COURT OF )  
GRUNDY COUNTY )  
In the matter of the Petition for Adoption of:  
HUDSON ADAM HIGGINS,  
a male child  
Grundy County Case  
Number 2025-AD-1  
To: ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN  
Take notice that a petition for adoption was filed in the Circuit Court of Grundy County, Illinois on August 4, 2025, for adoption of the child named, HUDSON ADAM HIGGINS. Now therefore, unless ANY UNKNOWN PUTATIVE FATHERS or ANY OTHER PERSON WHOM IT MAY CONCERN files an answer to the Petition in said action or otherwise files an appearance therein in the said Circuit Court of Grundy County, 111 East Washington Street, in the City of Morris, Illinois, on or before the 29th DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2025, 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.  
Dated: 8/7/2025

Corri Trotter AC  
GRUNDY COUNTY CIRCUIT CLERK  
THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,  
GRUNDY COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Eric P. Frobish  
ARCD#6230921  
Mueller, Lawson & Frobish, P.C.  
124 W. Washington Street  
Morris, Illinois 60450  
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Eric D. Fisher, publisher



# Students of the week



Courtesy photo

COAL CITY MIDDLE School announced its Students of the Week, the first group of the new school year. Selected for the honor were [from left]: Patrick Doerfler, nominated by Mr. Masters; Sylvia Leman, nominated by Mr. Fatigante/Ms. Draino; Emily Munsell, nominated by Mrs. Roseland, and Bode Kline, nominated by Mrs. Sanburg.

# CCHS students can get college help tonight

Coal City High School invites students and families to its first ever College Admissions Night on Wednesday, Aug. 27 at 7 p.m. in the Coal City Performing Arts Center. The high school is pleased to welcome admissions representatives Tyler Myers from Illinois State University and Faith Haley from the University of St. Francis. They will be presenting on a variety of topics per-

taining to the college search and application process, including information on financial aid and scholarships. Mr. Myers and Ms. Haley will both be available to answer questions when the doors open at 6:30 that evening. The goal is to help students and their families with the exciting and sometimes overwhelming process of applying to college. Questions regarding the event should be direct-

ed to Art Stafford at [astafford@coalcityschools.org](mailto:astafford@coalcityschools.org).

## RGHS class of 1995 reunion

Reed-Custer High School class of 1995 will host a class reunion on Saturday, Oct. 18, 2025 from 6-10 p.m. at Station 343 Firehouse Restaurant in Dwight. RSVP by Oct. 1, 2025. Guests encouraged to attend. Please reach out to Sarah Partyka to RSVP at [wanderlust577@yahoo.co](mailto:wanderlust577@yahoo.co).

# Tigers runners off to a great start

The GSWB Tiger cross country team showed up big in the Beecher Bobcat Breakout JV meet at Kankakee Community College on Saturday, Aug. 23. On the girls side, Presley Franciskovich had a great one mile race racking up a 32nd place out of 78 runners with a time of 8:23. In the same mile race, Addie Slegl earned a 3rd place medal and finish with a time of 6:51. Autumn Hencinski earned the second place spot in the field of 78 with a time of 6:48. The boys also had great first season one mile

races. Blake Maxard came in blazing in 44th place in the field of 80 runners with a time of 7:52. James Muzzarelli had a strong finish in the 41st position with a time of 7:46. Brayton Vaughn had a stellar race for a 31st place finish with a 7:31. Tyler Futia did a fantastic job in his first one mile race to place 20th with a 7:12 time. Rounding out the 80 runner-field for the Tigers was a strong performance and first place win from Jack Simms with a time of 5:55. Great start to the season Tigers!

# Young fans must be accompanied by adult

As the fall athletic season gets underway, Coal City High School administration reminds Coal fans that students—eighth grade and under—must be accompanied by an adult at sports events. Students who arrive without an adult or not in possession of a high school identification card will be turned away at the gate. Additionally, no bikes,

scooters, skateboards or the like will be brought into the stadium area. Pickup games behind the bleachers are not allowed and no one is to be on the practice fields. School rules apply when attending sporting events, and everyone attending is encouraged to be there to support the Coalers.

# CCMS baseball sweeps Bourbonnais

In a heat shortened game, The Coaler "A" Baseball team completed the double header sweep with a 7-3 win over Bourbonnais Upper Grade in Bourbonnais to improve to 2-0 overall. Josef Smith went the distance on the mound allowing 3 runs on 5 hits while walking 1 and striking out 5. Carter Shain cracked two doubles and drove in a run. Derek Maxwell also added two hits with an RBI. Caleb Hall doubled twice and drove in two runs. Josef Smith drove in a run with a hit and Griffin Ratazak and Maxwell also added hits in the win. Chase Clubb, Josef Smith and Colby DeGrush all added hits and an RBI each and Ty Giger also had a hit in the win. The Coalers got in the win column with a 6-3 win over Bourbonnais Upper Grade by a 6-3 margin in Game 1 of the scheduled double header in Bourbonnais.

Carter Shain was a force on the mound hurling 4 solid innings of 2 run, 3 hit ball walking just 1 and striking out 3. Derek Maxwell nailed down the win firing the final 2 innings allowing nothing while striking out 3. Caleb Hall doubled twice and drove in two runs. Josef Smith drove in a run with a hit and Griffin Ratazak and Maxwell also added hits in the win. IVC loss The Coalers dropped an IVC conference game to a talented Channahon squad at home by a score of 14-4. Caleb Hall started on the mound going the first 4 innings giving up 7 runs (4 earned) on 6 hits while walking 1 and striking out 3. Chase Club came on to toss 1 inning giving up 7 runs (3 earned) on 5 hits while walking 2 and striking out 1. Carter Shain had 2 doubles in 3 at bats. Josef Smith also had 2 hits. Cody Allen and Caleb Hall added

hits. Season opener The Coalers took a 4-1 lead into the 5th inning in their opening game of the season but could not hang on and dropped a 6-4 decision to host Minooka. The Coalers employed 4 different pitchers in the contest. Derek Maxwell started on the hill going the first 2.1 innings giving up 1 earned run on 4 hits while walking 1 and striking out 3. Griffin Ratazak came on to toss 1.2 innings giving up 2 earned runs on 2 hits while walking 3 and striking out 3. Carter Shain was the next to take the mound chucking .2 innings giving up 2 unearned runs on 0 hits while walking 2 and striking out 2. Liam Ratazak came on to throw two pitches to get the last out. Griffin Ratazak, Carter Shain and Cody Allen all had hits and an RBI in the game.

# A perfect week for CCMS ladies

The CCMS softball A team turned in a solid week, winning all five of their games. They swept Summit Hill and the Panthers on Saturday with double-header wins of 15-11 against the Spartans and 14-2 over the Panthers in four innings. Pitcher Caylee Lynn started in both wins, striking out seven Panthers while giving up four hits and four walks. Against the Summit Hill she was relieved by Haileigh Caise who turned in five strong innings. Leading hitters were Charly Gray with five hits on the day. Leah Aldridge finished with three hits and six RBIs. Lynn had five

hits for five RBIs. Elly Nicholson drove in three runs off three hits. Hailey Fisher had two hits in each game. On Thursday they shutout Reed-Custer 13-0 thanks to 10 hits led by Lynn with a home run, triple and single for six RBIs. She also pitched the win, needing only one innings before Gray took over for the next three, striking out six batters. Gray also hit a triple and a single, Nicholson had a double and a single while Mackenna Cuddy and Abbey Mills contributed a hit. On Wednesday the Lady Coalers upended Wilmington 13-1 in four innings. Cuddy pitched the

victory with seven strikeouts and one walk while giving up one hit. Lynn had two key hits to drive in three runs. Nicholson and Fisher both had RBI singles. On Tuesday Coal City scored runs in almost every inning to defeat the SMS Lady Rams 14-8. Nicholson went 4-for-5 with a triple and three RBIs. Lynn had three hits and three RBIs while Rae Aldridge finished with a pair of hits for three RBIs. Lynn went five innings in the circle, giving up two hits, six walks while striking out six. Caise finished the final two innings with three runs off three hits while fanning one.

# Coal City Miners take on Chanooka Braves

The Coal City Miners Superlights fell short against the Chanooka Braves by a score 31-14 on Sunday, Aug. 24. In the first quarter the defense came out swinging for the Miners. The defensive line forced a massive 10-yard fumble loss. Oakley Parks delivered a clutch stop, forcing a fumble and turnover. Provance showed grit on the line, pushing through for a key loss. For special teams Henry made a standout save on the front line, keeping the Braves from breaking through. The offense began to find rhythm in the second quarter. Ryder Delk powered through with a 45-yard gain, leading the "Big Boy" offense. Oakley Parks followed up with a 10-yard QB keeper. Another solid 5-yard gain kept the chains moving. Despite the effort, the Miners trailed 0-18 at halftime. The 3rd quarter was a quiet quarter with no major highlights reported. Offense ignited late in the 4th quarter when Oakley Parks broke loose for a thrilling 40-yard

touchdown run. The "Big Boy" offense added another 40-yard touchdown to close the gap. Defense held strong as Jacob Thill made a crucial 3rd down stop for a loss. Henry forced a run inside, setting up Oakley for a key tackle. Provance and Caleb both fought hard on the line, forcing losses. Oakley added another 3rd down tackle for a loss, showing relentless pursuit. In the Lightweight game in a gridiron clash dominated by defense, the Coal City Miners emerged victorious over the Chanooka Braves in a thrilling overtime finish Sunday afternoon. For four quarters, neither team budged, as both defenses showcased grit, discipline, and relentless pressure. The Miners' defensive unit stood tall from start to finish, with standout performances from Cole Watson, Eddie Gergits, Adam Calderon, Brady Loughran, Aaron Evans, Oliver Edmonds, Mikey Tworek, Brayden Plata, Jacob Harris, Elliot Munsell, and Cooper Lardi. Their

effort kept the Braves scoreless through regulation. With the scoreboard frozen at 0-0 at the end of regulation, the game advanced to overtime, where each team was granted a chance to score from the 10-yard line. Coal City capitalized on their opportunity when quarterback Cole Watson powered through with a keeper for the game's first and only touchdown. Watson then connected with Aaron Evans for the crucial extra point, giving the Miners a 7-0 edge. The Miners defense held the Braves on their opportunity to score in overtime with Gergits delivering a clutch sack on the final play to end the Braves comeback hopes. That single score proved decisive, as the Miners' defense once again held firm to deny the Braves on their possession, sealing the hard-fought win. It was a true battle of wills, but in the end, the Miners' toughness and execution in crunch time made the difference. The Miners JV deliv-

ered a dominant performance this weekend, defeating the Chanooka Braves with a decisive 22-12 victory. From the opening kickoff, the Miners showed strong teamwork and determination on both sides of the ball. Coal City's offense led by Bainen Durkee controlled the pace of the game, putting up 22 points with impressive runs by Drake Figgie, Austin Newman and Abraham Agurrie, heading down field with the offensive line paving the way. Meanwhile, the defense held firm, with great stops from Collin Ness, Brody Bitner, Drake Heath and many others limiting Chanooka's scoring opportunities and forcing critical turnovers that swung momentum in the Miners' favor. The varsity team lost 24-0. The team fought hard but couldn't get things going. Ryan Carpenter, Easton Horath, Jase Varju, and Nolan McKinney played well. The team looks forward to working on things over the holiday weekend and getting ready for Manteno.



### Coal City Coalers Team Pride

#1 Sports Fans Weekly Internet Winner



**Samantha Guistat**  
Winner of a large 2-item Pizza, carry-out only

Must redeem by September 1, 2025

*"Proud to be serving the community for the past 40 years!"*

We will have a new Internet winner each week throughout the school year, so watch the Courant each week for the lucky Coaler Fan Winner.

*"Support Coal City High School Athletes"*

## Athletic passes available

Coaler fans can purchase athletic passes for the 2025-2026 school year. A district pass for admission to all regular season home games [not including state series contests] at the high school and middle school is available for \$75 per person. The district also offers a pass for all fall athletics at the high school at a cost of \$20. Passes can be purchased from the main office at Coal City High School from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays. Passes will also be available for purchase at the ticket table during all home athletic contests at CCHS. Single game admission to high school sports events is \$5 per adult [senior citizens—age 62 and older are free] and \$3 per student. High school students are free with a school ID.



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## Does not exist

WILMINGTON—My Sound Off post about \$1.99/gallon of gas was responded to but neither answered my question. One blamed Pritzker for Illinois gas prices. No argument here. One praised Trump for bringing gas prices down better than Biden. Again, no argument here. But neither Pritzker nor Biden promised gas would be \$1.99 a gallon. Trump said that price is already around somewhere. So I ask again? Where is gasoline for \$1.99/gallon? Anyone? Bueller? Anyone? Mr. President? Anyone? Mr. Putin? In the Epstein files? But the reason no one has been able to tell me where the \$1.99 a gallon of gas is located is because it does not exist. Prove me wrong.

## Who's to blame?

SHADOW LAKES— Oh my gosh, all the rain, and all the flooding. This must be the result of climate change. It wouldn't have anything to do with all the forest fires, releasing all that co2 into the atmosphere. Would it? Obediently yours, Margot Lane

## Putin's patsy

WILMINGTON—Remember when George W. Bush said that he looked into Putin's eyes and saw his soul? Bush's mistake. Remember when the Obama administration hoped to establish a friendlier relationship with Putin, calling it the "Russian reset"? Obama's mistake. But Biden wasn't fooled by Putin. Biden recognized that Putin's Russia is the first country since WWII to invade a sovereign nation within the European theater, seize Ukraine's Crimea, annex Crimea and get away with it. On the very day of peace talks last week Putin attacked and killed Ukrainian civilians including a toddler, telling the world that he won't end the war and nobody is going to stop him. Biden understood Putin's ruthlessness but Trump seems to think it's a joke. The 1994 Budapest Memorandum declared that Russia must respect Ukrainian borders but nevertheless in 2014 Putin invaded, slaughtered and occupied. Since 2022 13,800 Ukrainians have been killed and almost 35,000 Ukrainian children have been abducted by Putin. Advice to Trump is that peace cannot be achieved by appeasement no matter how much the aggressor flatters you. It's to Biden's credit that he addressed Putin severely. Irene

## Deeply disappointed

WILMINGTON—I am deeply disappointed by the Wilmington's City Council's decision to increase liquor licenses, paving the way for Berkot's to sell hard liquor and introduce gaming. Berkot's justification of needing this to compete with Jewel is profoundly flawed. As a grocery store, relying on a gaming facility signals deeper business issues that need addressing. Has Berkot's ever truly listened to its Wilmington customers? I don't recall ever seeing a survey asking us what groceries we would like to have. If there's space for gaming, there's space for a richer selection of merchandise. It's not the absence of hard liquor that drives us away, it's the quality and variety we yearn for. This decision sends a chilling message that our value lies only in our wallets. Deep gratitude to aldermen Jonathan Mietzner, Dennis Vice and Todd Holmes for not selling us out and standing with the community.

## Stop the killing

BRAIDWOOD—Nothing is as it seems when it comes to Trump. He brags about his deal making ability but he looked like a wimp in Alaska. Putin, on the other hand, looked cool as a cucumber despite the apparent desperation of his country which has an interest rate of 21%, their shrinking population due to losing a million men to the war against Ukraine and an economy half the size of the state of California. The civilized countries of Europe want the killing to stop in Ukraine due to their fear of Putin turning their guns on them as well. And Putin doesn't care because he answers to no one. He simply aims at a residential building with civilians including children. The question is, how can Trump take the side of Putin, this savage butcher? Trump's red carpet treatment of Putin accomplished nothing.

## Costing us billions

SHADOW LAKES— If you don't care about the pain and suffering that the way the deportations of undocumented immigrants is being done, maybe you'll care about the fact that 90% of immigrants who are being arrested are being held in privately owned detention camps. Purposely being held for months at a time, this is costing taxpayer billions of dollars.

## ebike dangers

BRAIDWOOD— When is the City of Braidwood and the Braidwood Police Department going to start cracking down on these young kids riding these electric scooters in town. I've seen numerous instances of young kids riding these things at fast speeds, not stopping and riding right out in front of vehicles and flying by people who are trying to walk down the sidewalk forcing them to walk off into the grass. Is it going to take a young child getting hurt or worse killed before they start cracking down on it. It's already a state law that these electric scooters are banned in Illinois unless a town passes their own ordinance allowing them with restrictions. Towns all over the place are already addressing this so Braidwood needs to as well before a disaster occurs.

## Taxpayer giveaway

BRAIDWOOD—On Aug. 12 I watched the city council meeting and the city administrator said we will be giving TIF funds and tax incentives to an existing business that had already received both when they came to Braidwood. I am calling on all other existing businesses that want to expand or make updates to their business to ask city hall for TIF funds and tax incentives. To give out TIF funds and tax incentives to the same business twice is just altogether wrong, misuse of taxpayers' money.

## Blocked sidewalks

WILMINGTON—I am a concerned citizen in the old part of Wilmington. There's a problem with people parking their cars and vehicles on sidewalks and 30 feet or less from street corners. I was wondering what the ordinance is on that. People have to walk out in the street and almost get hit by a car like families and elderly people. There is another issue with the noise ordinance in town as well. What is the ordinance? Before 8 a.m.? Landscapers can fire up their machines after 7 a.m. and I thought it was after 8. Where's the enforcement with that?

## Taking a stance

WILMINGTON—First, I would like to thank Jonathon Mietzner for standing up and being the voice of reason about Berkot's upgraded liquor license that makes them eligible for a gaming license. Second, thank you to Dennis Vice and Todd Holmes for agreeing that a grocery store should not have such a liquor license nor a gaming machine license. I am so very disappointed with the rest of the city council. Grocery shopping is a basic human right, and a person should be able to grocery shop without worrying about their children or themselves being exposed to gambling or alcohol consumption. Then there is the whole thing about Berkot's, literally taking the food off of some tables. If you are a person who battles with overindulging, and you only have \$20 in your pocket, but you are confident that you can gamble that \$20 and turn it into the \$40 that you actually need. Get the picture? Out of Wilmington, Coal City and Braidwood – Wilmington has the lowest median household income, the lowest population, the highest amount of video gaming tax revenue and the most gaming licenses. Now, let's remember, in order to get that gaming license, you must serve alcohol. Not sell it, serve it. Yes, we really need Berkot's to be involved in taking money away from the poorest community. Thank you, city council, for looking out for your community - Not. Yes, Berkot's has been a good neighbor, but that ended Tuesday night. I am a big supporter of "shopping local." I haven't even been to the new Jewel, because I have been loyal to our store. But, I draw the line here. This is my pledge – Berkot's, the store that I love, none of them will ever see another dollar of my money once the gaming has



been installed in Wilmington. Enough is enough.

## Expensive idea

BRAIDWOOD—We keep hearing at City Council meetings talk about how the mayor badly wants to create this huge town center park in the downtown area. Where is the city going to get all this money to build it? Even if the city gets a grant from the state, it's still a 50/50 match. For example, if this big town center ends up costing say \$8 million to build, the city would still have to pay \$4 million of that total. Where's that money going to come from? Don't be so dead set on getting this town center built. Talk about wasteful spending.

## Severe sanctions

COAL CITY—How did Putin answer the recent peacenegotiations? Deadly attacks against Ukrainian civilians, that's how. And as Trump waffles, he exposes his Jekyll-Hyde personality. On the one hand Trump's Jekyll allows Putin to get away with relentless butchery unpunished. Yet on the other hand Trump's Hyde brashly orders American residents to a lifetime in jail without due process. What about Trump's braggadocio of resolving 6 war conflicts? Foreign policy experts have dismissed it as more empty Trump talk making the entirety of the Alaska summit a further confirmation that Trump is nothing more than a mealy-mouthed sycophant of Putin. Considering that the treacherous Putin has been indicted for war crimes by the International Crime Commission on March 17, 2023 on charges of abducting Ukrainian children, Putin should be grabbed and held for trial should he step outside of Russian airspace.

## Live in peace

BRAIDWOOD—To all the Braidwood residents who voted for a change of mayors. Hopefully you enjoy getting regulated to the max by ordinance, upon ordinance, rule upon rule. Braidwood has yet to become a more enjoyable place to live. Instead, Code Enforcement is out harassing citizens, telling residents what they can and can't do on their own private property. People want to live in peace and not get harassed by the town government officials. Now we hear talk of spending tons of money on this so called city center, hiring more employees at city hall, paying a management consultant almost \$100 an hour, paying a new police chief almost \$20,000 more than the previous police chief on top of a bunch of additional fringe benefits. And the city is involved in a wrongful termination lawsuit. Hopefully more people are starting to see our through the smoke & mirrors routine.

Trump has failed  
DIAMOND—Remember when Trump promised to lower prices on day one? Remember when Trump promised to end the war in Ukraine on day one? Trump has failed miserably on these promises and many more. But it appears that Trump's promise to become dictator is going strong when he demanded 5 more

Republican Congressional districts from Texas and got them and threatens to do the same in other states which would secure his absolute power forever. In fact, voting might be irrelevant because Trump would function as dictator. Remember when Trump claimed the 2020 election was stolen? Trump was recorded on the phone with Georgia's Secretary of State in the middle of the 2020 election committing voter fraud by demanding 11,000 more votes for himself and then had the unmitigated gall to preach that the election was stolen when he was the one trying to do the stealing. You can't make this stuff up. Although hesitant to play Trump's dirty political game, Democrats are now fighting fire with fire by redistricting like Republicans are doing and it's about time.

## On the take

BRAIDWOOD—Of course the corrupted Supreme Court recently ruled that Trump's punishment for not paying his taxes was too harsh. Is it because the Supreme Court itself is on the take and looks upon grift and graft as the norm? Yes, the twice impeached felon has not been punished enough for his illegal activities as well as his violent insurrection against democracy. Every day we see the Constitutional rights of normal people are violated due to Trump's heavy hand of political retribution. Many are unlawfully detained but cannot afford to pay for legal representation as recourse against the violation of their rights. It's acknowledged that Trump does not follow the rule of law but nothing can be done when our government is crippled by the dysfunctional Republican chamber of Congress and a Supreme Court degraded beyond measure leading to a President who governs with the notion that he is above the law. The resultant inequality violates our Constitution's preamble of "We the people".

## In high heels

WILMINGTON—Nancy Mace said she is Trump in high heels? But isn't Trump in high heels?

## Leave it be

SHADOW LAKES—Why are the states going through political redistricting? The district you have is the one you should keep. Counties, towns, states don't change borders. Neither should politicians. So my question is why are so many states going through political redistricting? That is BS. Leave it as it is. Dan Hill

## Scholar recognition

COAL CITY—Finally in last week's Coal City Courant recognition of unprecedented AP results in our high school. But, of course, the top of the page was the North Park Water Tower towering IHSA wrestling state. Something is better than nothing. Great job to our state scholars in the classroom.

## Commentary

# America can't afford to play favorites with energy independence

BY KENT BARTLEY

President Trump has made energy independence a pillar of his second-term agenda. Within hours of taking office, he declared a National Energy Emergency and signed executive orders to accelerate domestic oil and gas production.

His message was clear. America must no longer rely on foreign energy.

But securing true energy independence will require more than just drilling. Our nation needs to unleash every viable American-made energy resource -- both fossil fuels and renewables.

Indeed, President Trump has an opportunity to redefine energy dominance -- not by choosing sides but by embracing an energy strategy that is as resilient as the country it powers.

That resilience is going to be tested. By one estimate, domestic electricity con-

sumption will increase nearly 16% by 2029 -- a drastic acceleration compared with the past two decades, when demand crept up by just 0.5% annually.

Meeting this surge won't be easy, what with wars, supply chain disruptions, and energy price swings threatening to upend global markets on a seemingly daily basis.

Plenty of domestic energy resources are hiding in plain sight. Each year, the United States throws away up to 40% of its food supply. Much of it ends up in landfills, where it rots and releases methane, a greenhouse gas more potent than carbon dioxide.

That rot represents energy wasted. Anaerobic digestion can capture it -- and allow us to put it to good use.

Dairy farms are already deploying this strategy. Instead of letting manure from their cows pile up and release methane into the atmosphere, the farm feeds it into

an anaerobic digester. Microbes break down the organic matter. The result is biogas, a powerful renewable fuel that can generate electricity, heat water, or even be refined into a pipeline-ready fuel that integrates seamlessly into the existing natural gas infrastructure.

The remaining material -- called digestate -- is transformed into a natural fertilizer that enriches the soil without synthetic chemicals.

The United States has plenty of waste beyond cow manure for fueling anaerobic digestion. Food waste, farm byproducts, and other organic materials are being discarded every day. Diverting even a fraction of that waste from landfills could deliver a serious boost to our energy security.

For too long, energy policy in the U.S. has waffled between favoring fossil fuels and favoring renewables. But that's the wrong dichotomy. There's widespread

consensus that domestic energy is superior to foreign-sourced energy. That principle should be our guiding light.

Across the country, companies are pioneering breakthroughs in tidal power, green hydrogen, advanced geothermal energy, and next-generation solar cells.

These innovations don't compete with traditional energy sources. They reinforce and strengthen them. They can secure America's energy independence and make the entire system more durable in the face of geopolitical instability.

Energy independence will not be won by choosing sides but by embracing every American energy resource that moves us toward that goal.

*Kent Bartley is the president of the organic solutions division at Vanguard Renewables.*



# The unknowns of artificial turf

Dear EarthTalk: Can you set the record straight about whether artificial turf is actually bad for our health and/or the environment?  
-- Beth R., Summitt, NJ



Artificial turf fields have been rising in popularity as a low-maintenance (no mowing or watering) alternative to natural grass; North America has over 18,000 synthetic fields, and 1,500 are added annually.

Marketed as durable and green-looking year-round, it is also becoming known for its controversial health effects, with cities like Boston, Massachusetts, already enacting bans.

Artificial turf consists of layers: plastic blades at the surface, backing to hold the blades in place, and infill for cushioning and upright support. Carcinogenic chemicals such as heavy metals and volatile organic compounds have been found in the crumb rubber infill made from recycled car tires that is used.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) confirmed

the presence of benzene, arsenic, lead and more in the fill.

Mount Sinai identified similar chemicals in "safer" crumb rubber alternatives made from plastic, virgin rubber and plant-based materials. Exposure to these harmful chemicals may occur by ingestion, absorption or inhalation, with children at highest risk because of faster breathing and developing organs.

Many turf chemicals are soluble in water, allowing them to enter groundwater and soil when precipitation occurs. PFAS, often referred to as "forever chemicals," have been found in wetlands near synthetic fields, suggesting their ability to contaminate surrounding environments.

The plastic components of synthetic fields also lead to microplastic pollution, with estimates of around two tons of it being released into the environment yearly and 20,000 fibers entering waterways daily.

Artificial turf can also have other negative effects: It retains more heat, creating hazardous surface temperatures that can reach 200°F and contribute to local heat islands. As a result, they often require water for irrigation to keep surface temperatures low.

While natural grass has the ability to oxygenate the air around us, capture car-



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bon and reduce runoff, synthetic blades are unable to reap these environmental benefits. Lasting only eight to 10 years, it must be disposed of, further contributing to pollution.

However, there is still a lack of research regarding this topic, with most focusing on crumb rubber. Many scientific questions remain to be answered, such as how children can be exposed to chemicals through oral and dermal routes.

The evidence that we currently have is limited, with most studies unable to link synthetic turf use to actual health outcomes. Until these gaps in our understanding are filled, the chemical dangers of synthetic playing fields will remain uncertain.

Experts are divided, with Yale epidemiologist Vasilis Vasilidou stating, "I would not recommend parents let their children play on there. Period." For those who do use artificial turf, precautions include ventilating indoor fields, showering after play, and vacuuming infill that enters your house.

Be cautious of labels like "organic," "green," or "eco" because they do not guarantee safety and aren't regulated for turf products. Instead, choose transparent companies and ask the manufacturer for a full list of components, as Safety Data Sheets don't disclose all chemicals.

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

# Forest Preserve to host fall drum circle

The Forest Preserve of Will County is hosting a fall drum circle on Thursday, Sept. 11, from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

Welcome fall with a fun participatory drum circle led by James Evans of Three Rivers Drum Circle. Learn basic drumming techniques and how to create authentic rhythms. No experience necessary. Ages

18 or older; free. Register by Sept. 10.

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# Plan launched to place redistricting amendment before voters in 2026

BY JIM TALAMONTI  
THE CENTER SQUARE

Two former U.S. Cabinet members have launched a new effort to stop Illinois politicians from drawing their own legislative districts.

Fair Maps Illinois co-chairs Bill Daley and Ray LaHood spoke at a news conference last week at the Union League Club of Chicago and announced the push for a constitutional amendment to establish a redistricting commission.

Illinois' notoriety for gerrymandered maps gained national attention this summer as Texas House Democrats fled to the Land of Lincoln in an effort to avoid voting on Republicans' congressional redistricting efforts in the Lone Star State.

The current Illinois congressional maps signed into law by Gov. J.B. Pritzker in 2021 received a grade of "F" by Princeton's Gerrymandering Project.

Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation LaHood pointed to an example of gerrymandering in his hometown.

"Ryan Spain, who has

been our state rep for a number of years from Peoria, was drawn out of Peoria," LaHood said.

"People in his neighborhood go to the polls and say, 'I want to vote for my neighbor, Ryan Spain, who I know,' and he's not on the ballot," LaHood continued.

According to Fair Maps Illinois, the commission would be required to follow clear legal standards, which include no use of political party or voting history in drawing districts, maps prioritizing compactness and the preservation of communities and municipal boundaries, and continued legal protections for communities of interest and minority representation.

The amendment would apply to state legislative districts but not Illinois' congressional maps.

Constitutional attorney Michael Dorf said the Illinois constitution allows a narrow window for creating a referendum for a constitutional amendment.

"It only is allowed to be regarding a structural and a procedural change to the way the legislature is

constituted. That's why we can't do anything with respect to congressional redistricting or make a completely nonpartisan independent commission, because the Supreme Court has said that doesn't fit within that narrow window," Dorf said.

In 2016, the Illinois Supreme Court struck down a proposed redistricting amendment on procedural grounds.

In April of this year, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled against Illinois House Republicans who filed a lawsuit to challenge the state's legislative maps.

Former U.S. Secretary of Commerce Daley said he is confident voters will approve the measure if it gets on the ballot.

"The people of Illinois, for the first time in a very long time, have a chance to send a statement to the political system, both sides, that we want this thing to be different," Daley said.

Daley, who also served as chief of staff to former President Barack Obama, suggested the measure would gain momentum during next year's political campaigns.

"Everyone running for state rep, state Senate, and congressional and statewide officers holders, will be asked, 'Where do you stand on the fair map amendment,' and woe with those who don't say they're for it when this is on the ballot," Daley said.

LaHood served in the U.S. House from 1995 to 2009 and in the Illinois House from 1982 to 1983. A reporter asked LaHood if he was hopeful about the redistricting amendment.

"This will be on the ballot, number one, and no one will predict what the Supreme Court does, but we think the way that this is worded, the kind of support that it will have, this will drive a lot of people to the polls to vote for it. It's going to be an opportunity for the people of Illinois to finally allow for redrawing of maps that reflect where people live," LaHood said.

Former Illinois State Board of Elections Chairman Bill Cadigan said about 320,000 valid signatures would be needed to get the referendum on the 2026 general election ballot.

Greg Bishop contributed to this story.

# Recycle your bicycle - Sept.13-28 drop-off

The Forest Preserve is hosting Recycle Your Bicycle on Saturday, Sept. 13 through Sunday, Sept. 28 at multiple preserves. Clean out the garage and recycle your bicycle with the Forest Preserve District and Working Bikes, which refurbishes and

distributes bikes worldwide.

Drop-offs accepted at Hidden Oaks Preserve in Bolingbrook, McKinley Woods - Kerry Sheridan Grove in Channahon, Monee Reservoir in Monee Township and Sugar Creek Preserve in Joliet.

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The Wilmington VFW Post 5422 Honor Guard is looking for Honorably Discharged Veterans to join our team. The Wednesday Squad performs military honors at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery each week for our deceased brothers and sisters. We take pride in being the only squad made up entirely of veterans at ALNC.

Uniforms will be furnished. If you are interested or have questions about this noble cause please contact Squad Leader, Leonard Friddle at 815-342-4967. If no answer please leave a voicemail with your name and phone number. Messages will be returned as soon as possible.



# Chicago Mayor, teacher union want more statewide taxes to fund its schools

I've been belatedly reading Jeremiah Joyce's 2021 book "Still Burning: Half a Century of Chicago, from the Streets to the Corridors of Power; A Memoir."

The former 19th Ward Alderman and Southwest Side state Senator is a conversational writer and speaks frankly about some very divisive times, particularly regarding race (it can get cringey).

Joyce is remembered now as a consummate insider, but he came up the hard way without regular party support. It wasn't until he forged a bond with Richard M. Daley, the first Mayor Daley's son, that he came into his own as a power broker.

Anyway, what I wanted to tell you about was one of Joyce's observations of Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley, who died in office in 1976 during Joyce's one and only aldermanic term.

"Over time," Joyce wrote of the first Mayor Daley, "he developed a firm though rarely spoken theory of Chicago government - let some other entity pay, whether it be the state, the county, a regional body, or the federal government."

It was true then and it's still true today,



although perhaps stated more bluntly by the city's current mayor and some of his closest allies.

We saw it again for the umpteenth time last week when Chicago Teachers Union President Stacy Davis Gates castigated the governor and the Democratic legislative majorities for not spending more on the city's schools.

Gates, Mayor Brandon Johnson's most visible ally, was responding to Gov. JB Pritzker's remarks to reporters that the Chicago Teachers Union's demand for \$1.6 billion in additional state funding is "just not going to happen."

"And it's not because we shouldn't," Pritzker clarified. "We should try to find the money, but we don't have those resources today, and we're not going to see the resources from the federal government level either."

Pritzker went on to blame the Trump administration. "The federal government has taken away education funding from schools all across the United States," He said, adding that the state has increased funding by \$2.5 billion during his time in office.

"We are all having to deal with the onslaught of Donald Trump on education in this country, and

I'm going to continue to stand up for and protect students across the state of Illinois, including students in the city of Chicago," the governor continued.

"But, at the local level, every school is going to have to do whatever it is required in order to protect those students, and I will stand with them in that endeavor. But there is not extra money laying around in Springfield, mainly in part because of what Donald Trump has done at the federal level."

CTU President Gates issued a blistering response: "Logic would tell you that if the Republican despot in the White House is defunding public education, then a state with a Democratic supermajority should take the opposite approach by fully funding schools in its largest district. There was no delay in giving \$10 billion in tax breaks to the wealthiest businesses and individuals in our state, so why do Black and Brown children have to wait?"

The CTU has mentioned these "\$10 billion in tax breaks" quite often, so I reached out and asked what that was all about.

For the most part, these aren't actually "tax breaks." Instead, almost \$6 billion, according to CTU spokesperson B. Loewe, comes from the Illinois Revenue Alliance's list of potential tax hikes on corporations (although a very small part of that is from closing corporate tax loopholes).

Another \$4.5 billion is from not imposing a state surcharge on annual income over \$1 million, which would require a constitutional amendment and couldn't be implemented until after the 2026 election, if voters approved it.

Loewe also pointed to several state incentives criticized by a group called Good Jobs First, including tax breaks for electric vehicles, data centers and TV and film production.

But it's not like state leaders can snap their collective fingers and suddenly produce \$10 billion in new revenues. Lots of labor unions, particularly the trades, would strenuously object to some of these ideas.

What the CTU really wants is an immense expansion of the state tax base.

"Why do students at Carver Elementary have to go without their flag football team?" Gates asked about state underfunding. "Why are educators being told to conserve toilet tissue and paper towels? Why does everyone have to subsidize the foot-dragging of our governor and Democratic General Assembly?"

From the first Mayor Daley to the present, some things never change.

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

# Families, teachers can take advantage of tax credit

As students across Illinois return to the classroom, Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) are reminding parents and educators to take advantage of tax benefits available on their 2025 Illinois individual income tax returns.

"I want parents and educators to know that they can take advantage of tax credits to help cover qualified educational expenses. These tax credits will put money back in the pockets of working families, improve learning environments for students statewide, and make this busy time easier for parents and teachers," said Governor JB Pritzker.

**Tax Benefits for Parents and Guardians**  
The Illinois K-12 Education Expense Credit allows parents or legal guardians of full-time K-12 students (under age 21) to claim a 25% tax credit on qualified education expenses over \$250. The maximum credit is \$750 per household, regardless of the number of qualifying students.

Eligible expenses include tuition, book rentals, and lab fees paid to the student's school. For home-schooled students, book rental and lab fees over \$250 qualify when part of an approved home school curriculum.

In Tax Year 2024, more than 197,350 Illinois tax-

payors claimed the Education Expense Credit, totaling over \$64 million, with the average credit amounting to \$324.

"Back-to-school season brings significant costs, and we recognize the dedication of Illinois educators, and the sacrifices parents make to support their children's learning," said IDOR Director David Harris.

**Tax Benefits for Educators**  
The K-12 Instructional Materials and Supplies Tax Credit supports teachers, instructors, counselors, principals, and aides who work at least 900 hours in a full-time K-12 school during the school year.

Eligible educators can claim up to \$500 in tax

credits for out-of-pocket spending on classroom materials. Married couples who are both qualifying educators and file jointly may claim up to \$1,000.

In Tax Year 2024, more than 81,900 educators claimed this credit, totaling over \$35.5 million in savings.

Taxpayers are encouraged to keep receipts on all qualifying purchases, so they are accessible when it is time to file taxes.

To learn more about the Illinois Education Expense Credit, please read IDOR Publication 112 located on IDOR's website tax.illinois.gov.

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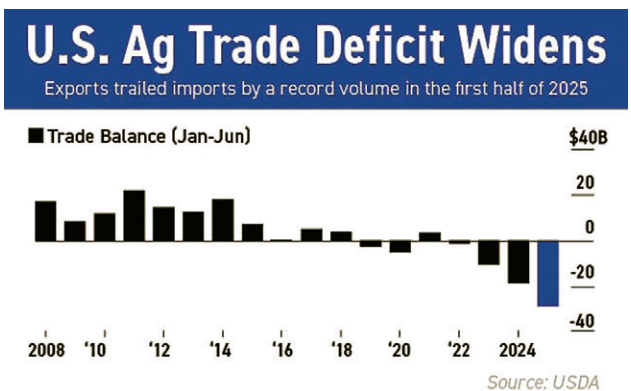


# U.S. agricultural trade deficit reaches new record high

BY TAMMIE SLOUP  
FARMWEEK

The U.S. ag trade deficit climbed to a new high the first half of 2025. The deficit hit a record \$28.6 billion through June, according to USDA data released this month. Ag exports through June totaled \$85.6 billion with imports totaling \$114.1 billion, a deficit of nearly \$29 billion compared to last year's trade deficit of \$18.4 billion during the same period. Weak production growth, increased demand for imported food and ongoing trade conflicts are major drivers of the increasing ag trade deficit. In June alone, the value of U.S. ag exports trailed imports by \$4.1 billion - a gap that's 14% wider than a year ago. President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs announced in April were prompted by the "large and persistent trade deficit that

is driven by the absence of reciprocity in our trade relationships and other harmful policies like currency manipulation and exorbitant value-added taxes perpetuated by other countries," Trump said at the time. The administration has negotiated a handful of trade deals since April, most recently pausing reciprocal tariffs on China as the two key trading partners continue trade discussions. The trade war has cut exports from the U.S. to China in half, with U.S. Commerce Department data showing the U.S. exported just \$5.5 billion to China the first half of 2025 versus \$11.8 billion last year. The drop came as Trump hiked tariffs on Chinese goods to more than 100% earlier in the year, and China responded by imposing equally high tariffs on American goods. In June alone, ag exports to China were the



lowest since 2010, with no soybeans at all. And as of July 24, U.S. soybean exporters had sold just more than 3 million metric tons of soybeans for export in 2025-26, which begins Sept. 1. That volume is a 20-year low for the date and is down 12% from last year. New-crop sales are struggling because China has yet to buy a single cargo, and this is China's latest start in the U.S. bean market since 2005, according to Zaner Ag Hedge's Karen Braun. In examining the trade

deficit, it's important to understand the U.S. imports products to ensure year-round access to fresh produce and goods not widely grown domestically. Coffee, for example, is almost entirely imported, since production is limited in Hawaii and Puerto Rico. While some seasonal producers face competition from imports, many imported goods do not directly compete with U.S. crops or are made using U.S.-grown ingredients, according to the American

Farm Bureau Federation. In other cases, imports complement domestic production. Oranges are a good example. Most oranges consumed in the winter and spring are grown in the United States, but during the off-season, imports help meet consumer demand and keep shelves stocked. In fiscal year 2025, which runs through Sept. 30, USDA projects that horticultural products, including fruits, vegetables, nuts, wine and other alcohols, will account for approximately 49% of total agricultural imports by value. "Strong U.S. demand for high-value, consumer-ready products, many of which are not widely produced domestically, has driven up import values, while a large share of U.S. exports remain lower-value bulk commodities, contributing to the growing trade imbalance," according to a June AFBF Market Intel. A strong U.S. dollar

and high labor costs have made American goods more expensive for foreign buyers, weakening global competitiveness. At the same time, trade barriers, retaliatory tariffs and ongoing disputes have limited access to important markets. After decades of consistent trade surpluses, U.S. agriculture has been in an agricultural trade deficit since 2022. In FY 2023, the trade gap reached \$16.7 billion and nearly doubled in FY 2024 to \$31.8 billion. USDA now forecasts the FY 2025 deficit will rise to approximately \$49.5 billion, which would mark the largest agricultural trade imbalance on record. The next quarterly trade outlook is scheduled for release on Aug. 28. This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.

## Sore throat hacks that work

Sore throats: they're pesky. They're not just a winter thing (hello, spring allergies). And they can turn serious, such as strep throat. Do a web search for at-home remedies, and you'll get a lot of results. Which ones work? Which ones might feel good in the moment but don't get the job done? Isha McConkey, DO, a family medicine physician at OSF HealthCare, has your checklist: Ice cream: she doesn't recommend it. "I know it feels good. But it will increase mucus production in most people. That's going to exacerbate the [throat] irritation," she explains. "We also don't want a lot of sugar," which could lead to cavities. In fact, Dr. McConkey says this logic applies to dairy foods overall. Skip them come sore throat time. Popsicles: These are OK, Dr. McConkey said. Just go for a sugar free or fruit juice-infused option. Cough drops: Choose cough drops with xylitol, a sugar alternative, Dr. McConkey noted. Honey: It's excellent.

You're still getting sugar, though, so don't guzzle it. Try making a drink with hot water, honey and lemon. Or incorporate honey into your tea. "You can even add a little cayenne pepper. In some types of sore throats, it may make it worse. But most people find it can be very soothing. It has some numbing properties," Dr. McConkey adds. But don't take that as a license to eat spicy food. The acidity in tacos, for example, might cause throat irritation. Soups: Pop that chicken noodle soup in the microwave, Dr. McConkey says. She says research has found that some soups have antibacterial properties that can help with any illness. Opt for a low sodium can. Salt water: You've probably seen online videos or heard the tactic passed down by family members. Yes, it can help, Dr. McConkey says. Gargling salt water can decrease swelling, she says. Try it before you drink your tea or before you go to bed to help get a restful night.

## The power to fight germs is in your hands

If the COVID-19 pandemic taught us one thing, it was the importance of washing our hands. Apparently, not everyone got the message. In May, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) launched the Hands In For Handwashing campaign to raise awareness about the importance of handwashing to help stop the spread of infectious diseases. The campaign includes the 2025 NFID State of Handwashing Report, based on a new national survey of U.S. adult handwashing knowledge and habits. The survey found that only 33% of respondents report washing their hands more now than they did during the COVID-19 pandemic. Men were more likely to not wash their hands at key times than women. The more startling fact is that nearly half of adults (48%) admit to forgetting or deciding not to wash their hands at important times, like after shopping, eating at a restaurant or visiting a health care setting. "I was surprised to learn that only half of people wash their hands at key times, because as a nurse, that's the first thing they teach us - hand washing. Because they want us to keep our patients healthy," says Breanne Gendron, a nurse practitioner for OSF HealthCare. "Bacteria and viruses live on surfaces and people, and we need to wash our hands, so we don't spread them amongst each other." The top reasons that motivate adults to wash their hands are after using the bathroom, touching food and handling human or animal waste. Washing your hands is a difference maker, especially since 80% of infectious diseases are spread by dirty hands. "The most important times to protect yourself is before you eat," Gendron says. "You're exposed to an exponential number of bacteria when you use the bathroom, just because of how our body's waste system works." Gendron offers other important tips - don't touch your face, especially when you're in public. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is good to use, especially if you can't wash your hands. But it doesn't kill all germs. There's no substitute for washing your hands with soap. Wash with warm or cold water for a good 20 seconds, which is enough time to sing the Happy Birthday song twice. "The most important thing is, when you're washing you make sure you're scrubbing in between all the backs,

the tops, all the parts of your hands and then rinse, just making sure you're hitting all of it," says Gendron. Interestingly, many people admit to washing their hands more often in the fall and winter, even though germs that cause colds and norovirus and other infectious diseases spread throughout the entire year. Gendron says make a commitment to always wash your hands. "It's just the easiest way to remain healthy," she says. "If you wash your hands after you go to the bathroom and before you eat, you're just giving yourself such a leg up on avoiding infecting yourself with something or people that you love and are around. It's easy, so wash your hands." For more information on the importance of handwashing, visit the OSF HealthCare website.

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## Gas prices remain unchanged over week

Average gasoline prices in Illinois are unchanged in the last week, averaging \$3.38/g Monday, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois. Prices in Illinois are 0.5 cents per gallon higher than a month ago. Stagnation is indeed the word in these parts, with BP charging \$3.28/g and Love's at \$3.49/g in Wilmington. Expect to pay \$3.49/g across the board in Braidwood, while Coal

City's cheapest gas is \$3.49/ at BP, up to \$3.69/g at Gas N Wash. A trip to Morris or Bourbonnais may save you a few cents, with Pilot charging \$3.19/g and Casey's, \$3.39/g in Morris. Bourbonnais has gas for \$3.07/g at Gulf, up to \$3.39/g at BP. "The national average saw a modest increase over the last week after storms temporarily knocked the Midwest's largest refinery offline in Indiana, trigger-

ing sharp jumps in gas prices across Ohio, Wisconsin, and Michigan," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. "We could soon see prices cycle higher in Illinois and Indiana as well, although there's been some late-week relief in wholesale prices now that the refinery is restarting. With no major hurricanes threatening the U.S. at the moment, the biggest wild card remains any shifts in

Russia's war on Ukraine. For now, expect only moderate gas price fluctuations, with the potential for lower prices arriving later this fall." The lowest price in the state is \$2.73/g while the highest is \$4.79/g.

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Linda's family wishes to thank so many people for the wonderful posts, sympathy cards, kind words at her visitation, all the calls and visits to our homes, flowers and the extraordinary amount of donations to Kuzma Cottage in her memory.

Thank you to Father Gargol for a beautiful mass and to Deacon Jay Plese for a beautiful homily. Jay and I met to discuss that homily and Jay, you took my thoughts and nailed what Linda's faith was all about.

To Matt Baskerville. This man is a true treasure to not only our family but our entire community. The genuine compassion he has for his work and to the families he serves is beyond amazing. The care and concern he has for the families he serves is one of truly dedicated service. Thank you for the beautiful set up for her wake and especially driving yourself to Missouri to pick her up to bring her home.

May God bless each and every one of you!

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Gary, Jeff, Val, Todd, Kristin, Linda's loving grandkids and all of her siblings and their families

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# OBITUARIES

## Shirley Boero

COAL CITY—Shirley Boero (nee Watters), 95, of Coal City, passed away peacefully on Aug. 18, 2025, at ARC at Dwight.

Born on July 7, 1930, in Morris, Shirley Therese was a daughter of Charlie and Alice (Black) Watters. She was raised in Morris and graduated from St. Angela Academy.

On April 7, 1951, Shirley married Louis Boero in Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Morris and together they raised six children. After raising her family, Shirley earned her teaching degree from Lewis University in Romeoville in 1975. She went on to teach 5th grade at Braceville Grade School until retiring in 1990.

Shirley was involved in many volunteer activities including secretary to the Grundy County Board of the Red Cross and secretary to the Homemakers Education Association. She was a member of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church in Coal City where she was active with The Martha's, sang in the choir for 50 years, and served as a Lay Minister of Care. In addition, she volunteered in the first grade at the Coal City Grade School and for St. Vincent's Table.

Shirley loved spending time with her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. She had many friends, loved to visit and enjoyed playing cards.

Survivors include her children: Patti (Tracy) Monk, of Newport, WA; Joe (Rose) Boero, of Custer, WI; Allie (Pete) Brown, of Lena, IL and Cindi (Curtis) Grove, of Coal



City; grandchildren: Kelly (Nate) Short, Tim (Michelle) Brown, Laura (Matt) Hedges, Margaret (Caleb) Rhody, John Boero, David (Katrina) Boero, Lou (Kaitlin) Grove and James Grove, and 11 great-grandchildren, as well as several nieces and nephews.

Shirley was preceded in death by her parents, Alice and Charlie Watters; husband, Lou; sons: Charlie and Christopher Boero; brothers: Don Watters and Kenneth Watters, and sisters: Alice Mae Shuler, Mildred Watters and Ruth Bryant.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated in the Berst Hall with Rev. Josh Miller presiding and Deacon William Dunn assisting. Burial was in Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Braidwood, where Shirley was laid to rest with her late husband, Lou.

Pallbearers and honorary pallbearers were Tim Brown, John Boero, David Boero, Lou Grove, James Grove, Nate Short, Caleb Rhody, Matt Hedges and Mark Matteson.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Shirley's memory to Assumption BVM Church in Coal City or to a charity of the donor's choosing.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto [www.ReevesFuneral.com](http://www.ReevesFuneral.com) to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Shirley's memorial page online through social media.

Funeral services and arrangements were made under the direction and care of Reeves, Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory in Coal City.

## Lynnsey Jencon

BRAIDWOOD—Lynnsey “Lynn” Jean Jencon. This is my obituary. Who better to write it than myself. I was born on June 4, 1953, at Silver Cross Hospital in Joliet and raised in New Lenox on Spencer Road. My father, Joseph John James Jencon, was a train dispatcher for the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway (EJ&E). My mother, Janis Jane Jencon (née Close), was a school teacher and homemaker. Both have preceded me in death.

I have an older sister, Sherrill (Harry) Jencon Gramse, who is a retired nurse (46 years). My sister is my hero, helping people all her life.

The love of my life is Gloria Valdez DeLeon, also known as “Good Daughter,” which my mom nicknamed her. I never told Gloria enough times how smart she was. She put up with me for over 35 years.

I am survived by my nephews and nieces: Matthew Gramse, Jennifer Lynn Gramse, Alex Morfin, Melissa Morfin, Christal Garrelts, and Adam Morfin. Also, great-nieces Sakura, Selena, and Charlotte and beloved pets, Daisy and Gidget.

I attended Reiter School, a two-room schoolhouse in New Lenox until 5th grade. I then went to Oakview School on Cedar Road in New Lenox. I attended Lincoln-Way High School, Joliet Junior College, Western Illinois University, and Lewis University. I received my AAS, BS, and MS. I loved school, traveling, scuba diving, taking flying lessons in a Cessna, reading, my horse Oswego Lad, motorcycles, and Peanuts characters-especially Snoopy. I loved animals more than people.

I was secretary for the Will County Humane Society in Shorewood for 20 years. I was a Will County Sheriff's Deputy,



Sergeant, and Lieutenant (28 years). I have many “brothers and sisters” in blue. I spent the majority of my career in the Investigation Division.

Upon retirement in 2003, I became actively involved with the Braceville United Methodist Church. What a joy to be involved with the children's programs, especially Vacation Bible School, JAM, EDGE & STATIC, and everything a small neighborhood church has to offer.

God bless my family, friends, and animals. May GOD answer your prayers.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to any animal shelter of your choice. -Lynnsey Jean Jencon

Lynnsey's family would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to Silver Cross Hospital, the University of Chicago Cancer Center, Lightways Palliative Care & Hospice for their exceptional care and support.

Lynnsey Jean Jencon, 72, of Braidwood, passed away peacefully at her home on Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2025, surrounded by her family and friends. Cremation rights have been accorded. A memorial visitation will be held at R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory on Thursday, Aug. 28, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. with a memorial service at 12:00 p.m.

To share memories or offer condolences, please visit Lynnsey's online guestbook at [www.rwpattersonfuneralhomes.com](http://www.rwpattersonfuneralhomes.com) or connect with them on Facebook.

R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory 401 E. Main St., Braidwood is entrusted with arrangements.

## Betty Lou Findlay

Betty Lou Findlay, 79, passed away on Tuesday, Aug. 12, 2025, surrounded by her loving family, after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease. She was born Nov. 27, 1945.

Betty had a heart of pure gold, the kind that made everyone around her feel seen, heard, and cared for. She dedicated her life to helping others, always offering a hand, a smile, or a kind word when it was needed most. Her selflessness and sincerity were the foundation of the many lasting relationships she built throughout her life.

A proud and loving mother and grandmother, Betty Lou devoted her life to raising her children and supporting her grandchildren, cherishing every moment spent with them. Her family was her greatest joy, and she poured her heart into nurturing and guiding them.

She began her career as a bus driver and later became a Lieutenant at the Dresden Nuclear Plant prior to retiring from Mobile Refinery.

Her creativity and entrepreneurial spirit came to life when she opened "A New Look" salon in Wilmington, where she shared her gifts as a talented cosmetologist and permanent makeup artist. Her clients knew they were in good hands - not just for her skill, but for the kindness and care she brought into every appointment.

Outside of work and family, Betty Lou found joy in sewing, creating beautiful pieces with love and patience, and in playing pool, where her competitive spirit and laughter often lit up the room.



Betty is survived by her loving husband, LaVerne Howard Findlay Jr.; children: Heaven (Matt Hill) Findlay, Stacy Shewmake, Kaleb Findlay, Kenneth Shewmake and Bobby (Valerie) Findlay; grandchildren: Aubrey James Hunt, Aandrea Hunt, Amber Noonan, Misti Shepherd, Kayley Shewmake, Bubba (James) Shewmake III, Josey Ray Wells, Kenny Shewmake, Kane Shewmake and Kennedy Shewmake; great-grandchildren: Emily Noonan, Rylee Squellati, Rhyett Macaluso, Aurora Hill, Lily Findlay, Savanna Findlay, Kelly Sandstrom, Jakob Sandstrom, Hunter Shepherd, Noah Shepherd, Kinley Armstrong and Adalynn Shewmake; daughter-in-law, Kristi Shewmake; several nieces, nephews and cousins; as well as special friends: Irene, Barb, Bonnie, Sandy and Sue.

She was preceded in death by her children: Kelly Renee Shewmake, James Robert Shewmake Jr. and James Phillip Shewmake; parents, Phillip and Ruby Palmer; sister, Bingo Kozel; brothers: Roy Palmer, Andrew “Hound Dog” Palmer, Larry “Peewee” Palmer; and great-grandson, Markie Noonan.

Betty will be deeply missed but forever remembered in the hearts of her family, friends, and community.

A celebration of Betty's life will be held on Saturday, Aug. 30, 2025 at the Wilmington Moose, 32050 W. River Rd, Wilmington beginning at 3 p.m.

Arrangements are entrusted to: Genuine Care Cremation, 807 W. Jefferson Street Unit S, Shorewood, IL 60404.

## David Anderson



MARION, IL—David C. “Dave” Anderson, 53, of Marion, IL, passed away on Friday, Aug. 15, 2025 at Deaconess Illinois Medical Center in Marion.

Dave was born and raised in and around Morris. He served his country with the United States Army during Desert Storm. Following his service, Dave spent many years in the hardwood flooring industry before starting his own hardwood flooring company, “Anderson Customwood Flooring LLC” which he owned and operated for several years. Dave always spoke of moving to southern Illinois and with the support of his wife, Samara, they chased that dream in 2023 where he continued his business but was now able to enjoy all things outdoors especially hunting and fishing.

Dave was a proud member of the NRA and was an excellent marksman. Dave had many talents, if he set his mind to something, he was going to master it. In recent years, he mastered wine making, pickling just about anything, canning, cooking, speaking Spanish, bullet making, wood-working of all kinds, playing the guitar, artistic gourd carving, making jerky of all types and flower gardening, to name a few. Dave was a simple, yet complicated person, he was always generous and could be the most kind and understanding person



yet he carried a sharpness that could only be understood by those that knew and loved him.

He is survived by his wife, Samara (nee Guest) Anderson; his mother, Sheryl (B.J.) Fitzpatrick; his daughters, Britni (Giovann) Scianna and Mya Anderson; three grandchildren: Jack, Eva and Raven; his step-mother, Carol Anderson; his mother-in-law, Karen Guest; his step-daughters, Madison Asbridge and Olivia Asbridge; his siblings, Jennifer (Kurt) Crater and Jacqueline (Brett) Gould; his step-siblings: Ryan (Melissa) Fitzpatrick, Courtney Garrelts, Peggy (Darin) Moore, and Doug O'Connor; his sister-in-law, Amanda (David) Guest Brown and many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

He was preceded in death by his father, Daniel P. Anderson (2021) and his father-in-law, Larry Guest (2023).

Dave made a conscious decision to be cremated and was adamant about having no formal services. It is Dave's families wish that you celebrate him and his life doing something you have a passion for, learn something new, try something new and as you do, remember and pray for Dave.

Union Funeral home is in charge of arrangements, 213 East Oak Street, West Frankfort, IL, [www.unionfh.com](http://www.unionfh.com).

## Church to host Alzheimer's caregiver support group

If you or someone you know is caring for a loved one with memory problems, you are invited to attend a caregivers support group that meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. at the First Baptist Church of Coal City, 4470 E. Route 113 in Coal City.

This meeting is for caregivers only. For additional information, please contact Becky Haldorson at 815-791-2658.

Alzheimer's caregiver support groups have many benefits for both caregivers and patients. Caregiving takes a heavy toll on the caregivers' mental and physical health and the health of the patient with dementia is directly related to the health of his or her caregiver: the healthier the caregiver, the healthier the patient, and vice versa.

Support group participants, value support groups as a place to learn

more factual information about dementia. Increased education about dementia makes caregivers more effective: they are better able to respond to patients' needs when they understand and can anticipate them.

Furthermore caregiver depression decreases as caregiver education about dementia increases, and when caregiver depression decreases, patient outcomes improve.

## Learn to eat what's healthy for your heart

Morris Hospital and the Morris Hospital YMCA are offering a free heart-healthy diet program on Tuesday, Sept. 9, from 1:30-2:30 p.m. at the Morris Hospital YMCA, 2200 W. Dupont Ave., Morris. The program is open to the community and does not require YMCA membership to attend.

During the program, a registered dietitian from Morris Hospital will explain how to reduce saturated fats, cholesterol, and sodium in the diet while increasing fiber. Eating a heart-healthy diet helps reduce the risk of heart disease by lowering

cholesterol and blood pressure.

To register for the nutrition program, call Morris Hospital's Wellness Manager at 815-705-7358 or go to [www.morrishospital.org/events](http://www.morrishospital.org/events) and select the Nutrition category.

## Homeschool Day coming to Four Rivers

Homeschool Day will be held by the Forest Preserve District of Will County on Wednesday, Sept. 3, from 10-11:30 a.m. at the Four Rivers Environmental Education Center, Channahon.

The program called Animal Signs will include a naturalist-led field trip exploring tracks, feeding scenes and other wildlife signs. It will be free for anyone age 5 and older.

Adults must accompany each participant. Register by phone by Tuesday, Sept. 2: 815-722-9470.

There will also be a Tracks, Scat and More program from 10-11:30 a.m. at the same time, featuring a naturalist-led field trip investigating wildlife clues and patterns. Ages 11-18; free; adult must accompany participant. Register by phone by Sept. 2: 815-722-9470.

## Fall 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. 17, and will be ready to bloom beautifully for your fall decorating.

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

Call or text LuAnn Bolatto at 815-790-7134, by Sept 10th, to order.

## Website provides Route 66 Centennial information

The Route 66 Centennial will celebrate and commemorate the historic milestone of the hundredth anniversary of Route 66, and honor the Mother Road by helping the millions who live, work, and travel along it.

The dedicated Centennial website highlights the magnitude of the occasion with information about the vast array of activities, programs, events, and projects during the year-long festivities across the Mother Road.

The website highlights Official Route 66 Centennial events and projects, including the recently announced National Centennial Kickoff Event in Springfield, MO, a cavalcade of three Centennial caravans, AAA Route 66 Road Fest, and the Untold Story of Women on the Mother Road. It also focuses on Route 66 preservation success stories and spotlights future needs.

Individuals and businesses interested in participating in the Route 66 Centennial are invited to register on the new website, [route66centennial.org](http://route66centennial.org), subscribe to the monthly Route 66 Centennial Newsletter, become members of the Route 66 Centennial Club, and stay informed about

official Route 66 Centennial activities.

Bill Thomas is the Commissioner for the U.S. Route 66 Centennial Commission and Chair of the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership.

"Look no further if you're seeking the one-stop source for official Route 66 Centennial activities, programs, events, and projects," Thomas said. "The Route 66 Centennial Website also provides opportunities for the public to directly participate in all the fun and excitement the 100th Anniversary of the Mother Road will offer, including becoming a Member of the 'Route 66 Centennial Club,' securing Route 66 Centennial Certified status for your local Centennial activities and projects, and purchasing Centennial merchandise."

The Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership is a national nonprofit dedicated to revitalizing and sustaining Route 66 as a national icon and international destination. It is responsible for the Route 66 Centennial website, a key component of the Route 66 Centennial Communications Plan recommended by the Route 66 Centennial Commission.

Discover more at [route66centennial.org](http://route66centennial.org).

## Kayak Kollege open to those 12 and older

The Forest Preserve of Will County is hosting a kayak kollege on Friday, Sept. 12, at the Lake Chaminwood Preserve in Channahon from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

This workshop, led by American Canoe Association certified instructors, introduces participants to kayaking on flat

water with instruction on safety, paddling strokes and kayak types.

Wet exits will be demonstrated, and participants can try paddling techniques. All equipment provided, but personal kayaks are welcome. Ages 12 or older; \$35 per person. Register by Sept. 11.



# One Click College Admit takes the stress, fees out of admission to state institutions

Governor JB Pritzker, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) launched One Click College Admit, a statewide direct admissions program for Illinois public universities and community colleges.

Through One Click College Admit, high school seniors and community college transfer students in Illinois will receive college acceptances into the state's public universities by meeting only one criterion for admission: grade point average (GPA). This new program waives applications, application fees, essays and letters of recommendation for students.

"Enhancing access to Illinois' public universities and community colleges with One Click College Admit will empower even more talented students across the state to realize their full academic potential through higher education," said Governor JB Pritzker. "This program marks another step in my administration's steadfast effort to make Illinois the best state in the nation to receive an accessible, high-quality education, one that sets students of all backgrounds up for lifelong success."

"One Click College Admit will ensure every student a spot at one of our state public institutions, making our state's higher education system more accessible and equitable. Getting into college will be easy and stress-free for students and parents in Illinois," said IBHE Executive Director Ginger Ostro. "This new program is designed to remove barriers often encountered when applying to college, especially for students who are the first in their family to go to college."

"Illinois community colleges offer students a clear, affordable pathway to degrees, transfer opportunities and in-demand careers," said ICCB Executive Director Brian Durham. "One Click College Admit removes barriers and ensures students know that community college is not just an option, it's a smart first step toward their future."

"By eliminating the stress of essays and burden of fees, One Click College Admit creates opportunities for students who might not have thought college was an option for them," said ISAC Executive Director Eric Zarnikow. "Working together with our sister agencies and policymakers on the state's new direct admissions program, we can make college possible for more Illinois students."

High school seniors can begin getting automatic acceptances to Illinois public colleges and universities through One Click College Admit now for enrollment in the fall of 2026 simply by creating a Common App account and entering basic biographical information and their GPA.

"We know from the latest research that a college degree remains one of the most reliable paths to higher income and economic mobility for students from all backgrounds," said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tony Sanders. "One Click College Admit is removing barriers and making the path to higher education as simple as possible, so more Illinois students can access the opportunities and earning potential that come with a degree."

Beginning with the high school class of 2027, students can opt in to the program during their junior year of high school through an online form, ensuring they are

eligible to receive direct admission offers during the fall of their senior year. By opting in to the program, parental consent is given for the student's GPA to be shared with ISAC to match with the GPA admission requirements at partner public universities, which will give the student direct admission offers.

"Programs like One Click College Admit continue to streamline the college admissions process that will help keep Illinois' best and brightest in our state," said Dr. Jason Leahy, Executive Director of the Illinois Principals Association. The IPA looks forward to continuing to work with the state agencies to ensure our young people find educational opportunities in Illinois that best meet their needs."

While community colleges operate under an open enrollment model and do not hold GPA requirements for admission, One Click College Admit will make sure high school seniors know that enrolling at their local community college is an option to continue their higher education journey.

Beginning in January 2026, One Click College Admit will also serve community college students. To participate in the program, community college students wishing to receive a direct admission offer to an Illinois public university must complete an online opt-in form. By opting in to the program, consent is given for the student's GPA and required 30 transferable credit hours to be shared with ISAC to match with the admission requirements at partner public universities to identify the direct admission offers.

Visit the One Click College Admit website for detailed directions on how to participate in the program.

# Donations needed for monument for Civil War soldier

A fund-raising effort is underway to replace a monument at the Wilton Township Cemetery honoring Civil War veteran Ira Temple.

A monument erected decades ago has not withstood the elements and is no longer readable as it has broken in half.

Caretakers and other veterans want to replace the monument so cemetery visitors will never forget Temple who enlisted in 1862 with the Will County regiment, Company H with the 100th Illinois Infantry.

Leonard Seltzer of Manhattan is coordinating the effort to replace the monument. The goal is to raise \$10,000 pay off the Dwight company who will sculpt the new 50-inch tall monument.

Seltzer said \$2,000 in donations have been made and his open is the balance can be donated by May so the project can be completed.

"This would be an ideal project for an Eagle Scout candidate," Seltzer commented. "It's a worthy effort to honor a fallen Patriot who served our state before being taken prisoner."

Temple fought in the battle of Chickamauga in Georgia in September 1863 when he was captured and taken prisoner. He ended up dying and being buried at Andersonville Prison in Georgia on June 10, 1864 at the age of 45 years old.

Donations must be made by check only payable to Wilton Township Cemetery, First Bank of Manhattan, 550 W. North St, Manhattan, IL 60442.

For more details contact Seltzer at 815-263-4875.

# CLASSIFIEDS

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Diamond, Jackson Estate Sale. Fri., & Sat., Sept. 5-6, 9am to 5pm. 2340 E. Clark St. Saturday half price. Tools, antiques, Christmas, Native American decor, lamps, furniture, stereo, outdoor items, kitchen. fr35-36

**FOR FREE**  
Free upright piano in good condition. Wilmington. 815-922-7966

**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.

**Wilmington, 943 Winchester Green Drive. Thurs. & Fri., August 28-29 from 9am to 4pm. Home decor, clothes, school & classroom supplies, teaching materials, kitchen goods, misc. and much more. ca35**

**FREE**  
Granny Smith Apples. Tree is loaded. 815-476-7414. fr35-36

**GARAGE SALE**  
Braidwood, 956 N. Mabel Ct. Wed., Thurs. & Fri., Aug. 27, 28, 29 from 9am to 4pm. Adult & children costumes, seasonal decor, men's clothing M-L, Under Armor, Nike, BKE. Women's clothing S-L. Disney toys. Girls clothing, shoes, winter wear, boots. Vintage and collectibles, bed, bath, kitchen, coffee table, much more. ca35

**Wilmington, 410 Daniels Street. Thursday & Friday, August 28-29 from 9am to 4pm. Saturday, August 30 from 9am to 2pm. Household, holiday, collectibles, adult clothing, books, media, crafting, self care, beauty & more! ca35**

**HELP WANTED**  
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**CLUES ACROSS**  
1. Taxis  
5. Space Systems Command  
8. Plant seed by scattering  
11. Alliances  
13. Fiddler crabs  
14. Heroic tale  
15. Yemen capital  
16. Misleading gesture  
17. Cain and \_\_\_  
18. Simple shoe  
20. Hundredweight  
21. Children's toy in the snow  
22. Gets rid of  
25. Free of deceit  
30. Performed a dance  
31. Chinese philosophical principle  
32. Exaggerated  
33. Refrain from inflicting  
38. A doctrine  
41. Can be subdued  
43. A place to bathe  
45. Land used for pasture  
48. Curved piece of iron  
49. Automobile  
50. Fencing sword  
55. Breezes through  
56. Child  
57. NBA legend Iverson  
59. Horsley and Iacocca are two  
60. Midway between northeast and east  
61. Spiritual leader of a Jewish con-

gregation  
62. U.S. leader during much of WW2  
63. Lair  
64. Fibrous material

**CLUES DOWN**  
1. Home of "60 Minutes"  
2. Expression of sorrow or pity  
3. \_\_\_ fide: legitimate  
4. Immune response  
5. Assistance and support  
6. Glared  
7. Spanish saloon  
8. Pitch black  
9. S-shaped lines  
10. Statistical test  
12. \_\_\_ Paulo, city  
14. Graduation garb  
19. A way to record  
23. Not good  
24. Weather events  
25. A pituitary hormone  
26. Jamie Foxx film  
27. Rocker's accessory  
28. One point east (clockwise) of due north  
29. One who obtains pleasure from another's pain  
34. Consume  
35. Licensed for Wall Street  
36. Sick  
37. Israeli city \_\_\_ Aviv  
39. Removed the husk  
40. Mass of rocks and sediment  
41. Two-year-old sheep  
42. Area units  
44. Prison overseer  
45. Walked  
46. Wartime escort aircraft carrier  
47. Tax  
48. 50 percent  
51. Swiss river  
52. Tattle  
53. Actor Idris  
54. Resist authority (slang)  
58. Egg of a louse

**Puzzle Answers**



# Expectations high for experienced Coalers

BY JIM SHELTON  
SPORTS

Year in and year out, the Coal City football team is a formidable opponent. Throughout the last 47 years, they've had a winning record 40 times.

Last season, they advanced to the Class 4A semifinals for the first time in five years, but came one score short of a state appearance.

"With so many returning and having that experience last year, I think they raised their own expectations," said head coach Francis Loughran.

"I don't think that they're looking ahead which is key. You can't worry about the playoffs until you worry about the opponent that week. They've had that focus and motivation this offseason."

"Attendance is up. We've got about 56 kids out right now. Intensity is very good in the weight room and throughout summer camp. We've got a lot of guys that are competing for spots, which is a good thing."

The school's all-time leading rusher Landin Benson has graduated, but they return a solid core of guys including senior offensive/defensive linemen Cade Poyner (6-2, 225) and Wyatt Koehn (6-3, 240), junior tight end/defensive lineman Emmett Easton (6-1, 275), senior tight end/defensive lineman Donnie Ladas (6-3, 200), senior linebacker Mason Garner (5-10, 180), senior wide receiver Gavin Berger (6, 180) and senior defensive backs Brock Finch (5-10, 185), Noah Houston (5-10, 180), Brody

Widlowski (5-7, 160) and Carter Gill (6, 170).

"Poyner is a three-year starter and a team leader. Koehn has had a tremendous offseason. Easton has been starting since he was a freshman on the defensive line."

"Berger can do a lot of different things for us and Gill got a number of snaps at strong safety last year. We've got some good senior leadership and we're really excited about the upcoming juniors because they've had success the last couple of years as well."

You can't replace a Benson with one guy and the coaching staff is real excited about the number of backs available.

Junior Logan Natyshok (6, 205) was up as a sophomore all last year and he'll be getting a number of carries. You have guys like junior Aiden Scrogam (5-10, 195) and Widlowski along with juniors Kole Carpenter (5-10, 165) and Tyler Phillips (5-10, 195)," said Loughran.

"We feel it's a position of depth and a number of guys are doing a great job for us."

Junior Connor Henline (6-2, 170) will start at quarterback after appearing in a few games last year.

"He does a great job running the offense, very smart and physically talented."

The top newcomers figure to be Phillips, Carpenter and juniors: running back/defensive back Cooper Morris and wide receiver Braden Walker (5-9, 155) along with senior tight end/linebacker Trace Wilson (6-1,

185).

The Coalers will open Friday hosting Pontiac before traveling to perennial playoff power Richmond-Burton and then hosting Bloom.

"We start off with three unfamiliar opponents and three different styles so it will be good to see where we're at. Practice reps can never replace game reps."

"The last time we played Richmond-Burton was 2019 when they knocked us out of the playoffs. The kids are excited for that one."

Loughran sees a much improved Illinois Central Eight conference top to bottom.

"Some of the programs the last couple years were playing a lot of young guys, and now those guys are juniors and seniors, so you're going to see a more competitive conference schedule."

"Anybody can get anybody on any given night. I think our conference is pretty good when you compare them to others around the state so it'll be a tough, tough road for us this year."

The Coalers will close the regular season at rival Wilmington in a game that likely decides the conference title.

Let's go Coalers.



Photo courtesy CC Unit 1 School District

**GOOD GUY TACKLE** - Coal City runningback Aiden Scrogam (18) cuts to avoid a teammate during the Meet the Coalers scrimmage held on Friday.

## Four CC golfers shoot under 50

Coal City High School competed at The Oaks at Rivers Edge Golf Course, where they battled Pontiac in a close match.

Despite strong efforts from their lineup, the Coalers came up short, falling 197-187.

Head coach Harlan Kennell guided a young roster, featuring several sophomores and a junior in the varsity lineup.

Coal City individual scores were: Frankie Ponio (SO) - 44 (+8); Kory Lovell (SO) - 47 (+11); Jaxon Duke (SO) - 49 (+13); Cody Scheer (SO) - 57 (+21); Trevor Walker (SO) - 57 (+21); and Jack Steinhouser (JR) - 64 (+28)

Sophomores Frankie Ponio led the Coalers with a 44, while Kory Lovell and Jaxon Duke followed closely behind with

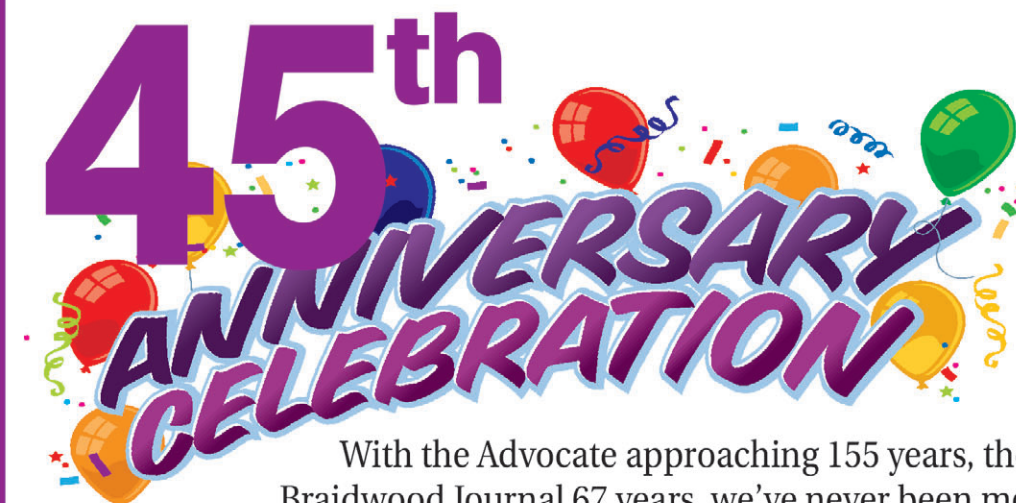
rounds of 47 and 49.

Kennell noted that early-season nerves and the challenging layout at The Oaks played a role in the team's performance, but he expressed optimism moving forward.

On Thursday, CCHS dropped their first conference match of the season against Herscher. This is Herscher's first season with a golf team with the Tigers won 160 to 174.

Jaxon Duke had a personal best score of 40, and led the Coalers. Cody Scheer also had a personal best score with a 44.

"I was very happy with the results, and having four scores under 50. This was one of our goals with our sophomore-dominated team, and it is great to see us achieve it early in the season," coach Kennell said.



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