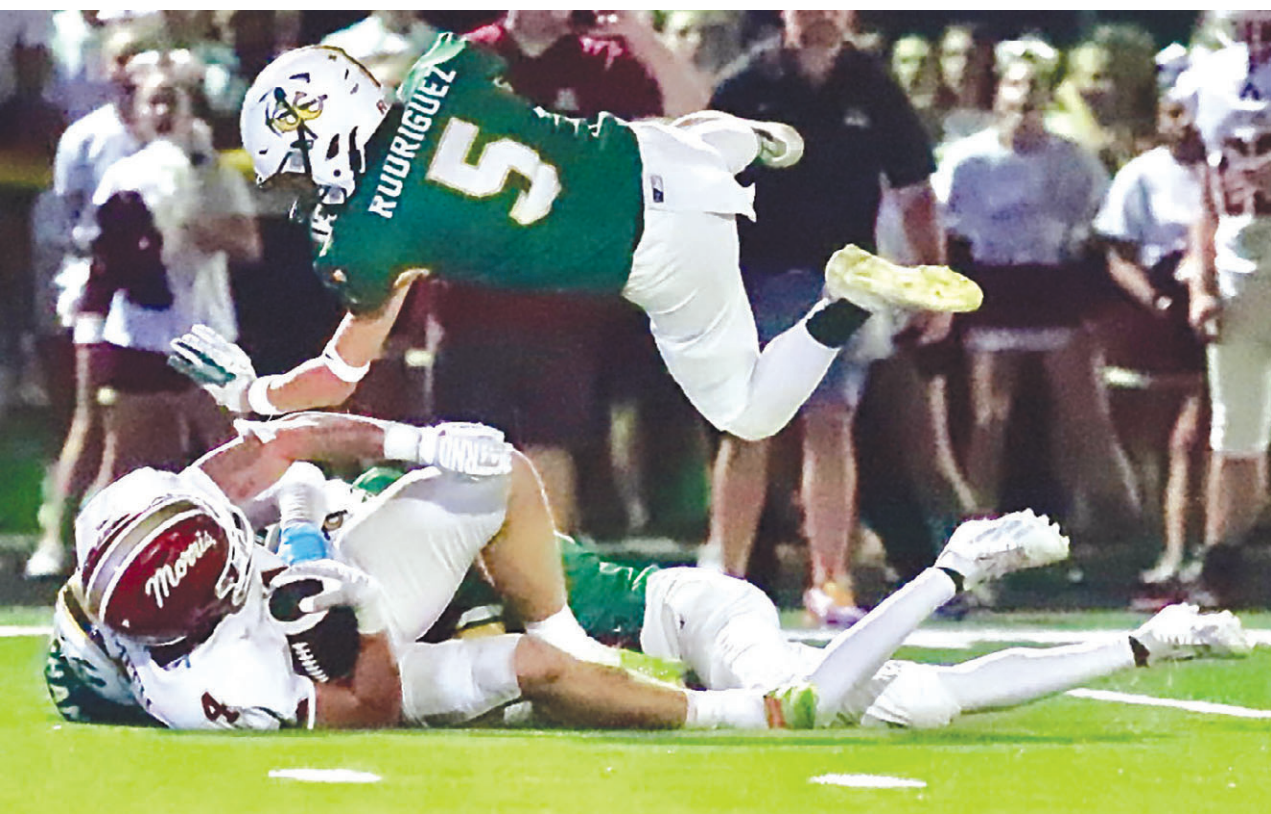




COALER BOBBY RODRIGUEZ leaps to avoid a late hit call as the Coaler defense make a big stop on Morris runningback Mick Smith on Friday during the first home game of the season. Coal City was down 14-7 at halftime for visiting Morris scored two second half touchdowns to win 28-7. The Coalers look to regroup on Friday when they travel to Lisle. Read more in sports.

Photo by Amy Walker

Is it time mayor, trustees get better pay?

Hasn't been an increase in nine years

BY MIKE LOOMIS
CORRESPONDENT

A pay raise may be on the way for elected officials in Coal City.

At their meeting last week, the village board of trustees reviewed a survey from the Illinois Municipal League that detailed what other communities similar in population size to Coal City pay their elected officials.

Trustees currently receive \$5,000 per year, which is \$492 higher than the average pay rate of the 35 other communities surveyed. The mayoral annual

pay of \$10,000 is \$4,333 lower than the average rate.

The last pay increase for officials in Coal City was passed in 2018. At that time, it had been 10 years since the previous increase.

If the village were to increase the rates adopted in the 2018 ordinance that are tied to the consumer price index, yearly pay for trustees would go up to \$6,495, while the mayoral pay would go to \$12,990.

Village Attorney Mark Heinle said that, according to state law, pay for elected officials can't be raised or lowered within their current term. Any change must be passed by ordinance 180 days before an election or the start of a new term.

With the next local

SEE VILLAGE BOARD PAGE 2



ILLINOIS GOVERNOR JB PRITZKER talks with local resident Connie Hubbard on Wednesday while visiting Wilmington as one of his early stops on the campaign trail.

Photos by Eric Fisher

The big man meets an even bigger man

Gov. Pritzker makes Route 66 stop at Gemini Giant

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

It's not often Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker has to look up to someone.

But that was certainly the case last week when the governor stopped in Wilmington to meet one of the biggest celebrities along historic Route 66 — the 30-foot-tall Gemini Giant.

Pritzker and his running mate, Christian Mitchell, made Wilmington one of the stops on a statewide bus tour launched as part of the governor's reelection campaign.

After Pritzker and Mitchell posed under the giant for his film crew to shoot a short clip, he shook hands with a handful of local residents and listened to what they had to say.

Waiting to welcome the governor at the legendary Launching Pad landmark was Wilmington Mayor Ben Dietz, who made sure Pritzker didn't leave empty-handed.

Dietz presented the

governor with his very own Gemini Giant bobblehead.

"Oh wow, thank you for this," Pritzker said as he accepted the miniature version of Wilmington's famous green space man. "I've never had one of these."

The visit provided Wilmington with a moment in the statewide spotlight while also giving Dietz an opportunity to thank the governor for Illinois' investment in Route 66 as communities along the Mother Road celebrate its 100th anniversary.

Over the past five years, Wilmington has received or participated in multiple grant programs tied to Route 66 and tourism improvements. Dietz said those investments have provided more than \$1 million in direct benefits to the community.

The funding has helped Wilmington construct a new downtown parking lot, open the Landing Pad visitor center, develop a new park area, install welcome signs and, most notably, help preserve the Gemini Giant.

SEE GOVERNOR PAGE 2





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Village Board,

continued from page 1

elections set for April 6, 2027, any change to compensation for officials in Coal City would need to be made by October, Heinle said.

“If there was a raise, it would not take effect until after the 2027 election,” Mayor Dave Spesia added during the Aug. 25 meeting.

The mayor serves a four-year term. Spesia’s current term ends in April 2027. The six trustees on the village board also serve staggered, four-year terms. Trustees Pamela Noffsinger, Dan Greggain and Dave Togliatti are all up for re-election next April. Terms for the other trustees – Ross Bradley, CJ Lauterbur and Bill Mincey – don’t expire until 2029.

“There would be a chunk of time where the elected officials up here would be making different amounts of money because you cannot receive a raise in the midst of a current term of office,” Heinle said.

Figures from the Illinois Municipal League – a nonprofit organization based in Springfield – show that in smaller towns and suburban communities in the state, part-time mayors earn yearly stipends that average \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year.

The filing period for Coal City’s next election is from Nov. 16 to Nov. 23, Village Clerk Kayla Melvin said. To run for mayor or trustee, candidates must complete and submit nomination paperwork, available at the village hall, 515 South Broadway Street.

Election petitions, requiring signatures from voters and must be filled out correctly, became available Aug. 25.



Photo by Amy Walker

COALER SUPER FANS—When it’s game day for the hometown Coalers it means getting out the face paint for the parents of senior football player Kyle Odam who applied green and yellow and grabbed their cow bell and pompom.

Governor,

continued from page 1

Dietz said the investment has also benefited small businesses by helping draw visitors traveling Route 66 through Wilmington.

“Five years ago the Governor made an effort to begin promoting Route 66 ahead of the 100th anniversary of the route,” Dietz said following the visit.

Pritzker’s Wilmington appearance was part of the five-day “Fighting for You” bus tour that began in Chicago. The governor and Mitchell planned stops across Illinois, including Springfield, the Metro East, Quad Cities and Rockford.

The Wilmington stop wasn’t all about roadside giants and bobbleheads.

Pritzker also toured the training center for the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150 in Wilmington where the 24,000-member union gave him their endorsement.

For Dietz, having



Photo by Eric Fisher

ILLINOIS GOVERNOR JB Pritzker and his running mate, Christian Mitchell, have a little fun being “tourists” in front of the Wilmington Route 66 mural during a stop last week.

Illinois’ governor make two stops in Wilmington on the same day was significant regardless of the politics surrounding the campaign tour.

“Having met the Governor a couple of times before, it is always an honor but really cool to see him right here in

Wilmington,” Dietz said on social media.

Dietz later addressed some of the partisan reaction surrounding Pritzker’s visit, saying his responsibility as mayor is to work with elected leaders regardless of political affiliation when doing so can benefit Wilmington.

“As Mayor, I don’t care if our Governor, Senator, or President of the United States is a Democrat or Republican,” Dietz said. “I have and will continue to

meet with any of our elected officials to help make our community better and do whatever I can for Wilmington.”

For at least a few minutes during the governor’s visit, however, politics took a back seat to one of Wilmington’s most recognizable residents.

And even for the governor of Illinois, standing alongside the towering Gemini Giant made for a big photo opportunity.

W-G Medical Clinic expands services to Gardner

Residents in Gardner and surrounding communities will soon have closer access to health and social service assistance with the opening of a Will-Grundy Medical Clinic location in the village.

The Will-Grundy Medical Clinic Health Partnership will provide services by appointment every Tuesday from 8:30 a.m. to noon at 229 Liberty St., Gardner.

The expansion brings the organization’s mission of creating healthy and vibrant communities through compassionate, holistic care closer to residents in the southern Grundy County area.

While the Gardner location will offer limited weekly hours, residents will be able to access a variety of services designed to help individuals and families navigate health care and other everyday needs.

Services available through the clinic include

case management, linkage to services, basic-needs supplies, assistance with public benefit applications, medical and behavioral health coordination, and workforce development. Residents may also call to inquire about the availability of other services.

Appointments for the Gardner location can be made by calling or texting (815) 705-4835.

The Gardner site is an extension of the Will-Grundy Medical Clinic, which has a location at 213 E. Cass St. in Joliet. The organization can also be reached at (815) 726-4837 or by email at contact@wgmedclinic.org.

The addition of the Gardner location provides another local resource for residents who may need help connecting with medical care, public assistance programs and other community services without having to travel to Joliet.

Suspect arrested on grooming 13-year-old

Seth Anderson, 34, of Wilmington has been arrested on felony charges after authorities say he groomed a 13-year-old minor and provided the child with alcohol and vape products.

According to Grundy County Sheriff Ken Briley, the Sheriff’s Office received a report Aug. 22 that the minor had allegedly been groomed by Anderson. Investigators said that over the course of about a month, Anderson communicated with the minor on Snapchat, sending messages expressing his love and requesting illicit contact.

Authorities also allege that Anderson provided the minor with alcohol and vape products.

On Aug. 31, the Grundy County Sheriff’s Office, assisted by the Braidwood and Wilmington police depart-

ments, located Anderson in the 500 block of West Baltimore Street in Wilmington. He was taken into custody and transported to the Grundy County Jail.

Anderson was booked on two Class 4 felony charges: Grooming and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

The investigation remains ongoing and authorities said additional charges may be forthcoming. Anderson is being held at the Grundy County Jail pending a pretrial release hearing.

Authorities also said Anderson had an outstanding warrant from Idaho for failure to appear on dangerous drug charges. That warrant has since been upgraded to a nationwide arrest warrant because of the charges filed in Grundy County.

Coal Bin to dispose of property

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE

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

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

Attorney Wharrie files Super estate claim notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS }
COUNTY OF GRUNDY }SS:
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT GRUNDY COUNTY - IN PROBATE
IN RE: THE ESTATE OF SHAWN B. SUPER,
Deceased
Case No.: 2026-PR-71

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION CLAIMS

Notice is given of the death of SHAWN B. SUPER. Letters of office were issued on August 21, 2026 to DONNA M. PACHETTI, 735 N. First St., Carbon Hill, IL 60416, as Independent Administrator, whose attorney is Larry G. Wharrie, 105 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL 60416.

Notice is given to all known and unknown heirs that the estate will be administered without court supervision, unless under 755 ILCS 5-28-4, any interested person terminates independent administration at any time by E-filing or delivering a Petition to Terminate to the Circuit Clerk.

E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases 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 to your local circuit clerk’s office.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the office of the Clerk of the Probate Division, at Grundy County Courthouse, 111 East Washington St., Morris, IL 60450 or with the representative, or both, within 6 months from the date of issuance of letters of office. Any claim not filed within that period is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it had been filed.

Dated: August 25, 2026.
DONNA M. PACHETTI,
Independent Administrator

Larry G. Wharrie
Wharrie Kiehan, P.C.
105 S. Broadway,
Coal City, IL 60416
Phone: 815-634-8990
ARDC #2996146
attyGW@gmail.com
Published in the Coal City Courant on Sept. 2, 9 and 16, 2026.

Coal Bin to dispose of property

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE

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

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

Attorney Black files DePaepe estate claim notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF JUDITH ANN DEPAEPE DECEASED

CLAIM NOTICE

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

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

DEBORAH ANN STUTZKI
INDEPENDENT EXECUTOR

Donald F. Black
Black & Black Lawyers
201 Liberty Street
Suite 211
P.O. Box 148
Morris, IL 60450
815-942-0594
Published in the Coal City Courant on Aug. 19, 26 and Sept. 2, 2026.

Coffee with the Superintendent

To keep the lines of communication open with Coal City School District families and community members, Superintendent Chris Spencer is holding a Coffee with the Superintendent quarterly with the first one to be at 9 a.m. on Sept. 14 in the Board Room of the District Administration Center.

Meents Law, P.C. files adoption notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT GRUNDY COUNTY, ILLINOIS

IN RE THE MATTER OF: ELIZABETH BLANK and JOSEPH BLANK, Petitioners to adopt HUNTER J. BRYAN, a minor.
No. 2026AD5

NOTICE

TO: MICHAEL STEWART

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

Dated: August 24, 2026
Corri Trotter AC
Clerk of the Circuit Court

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

Olbro applies for property variance

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that a Public Hearing will be held by the Coal City Zoning Board of Appeals on the Zoning Ordinance on the 21st day of September, 2026, at 7 ‘clock p.m. in the office of the Board of appeals, Coal City Village Hall, 515 South Broadway, Coal City, Illinois on the following matter:

To consider: A single Family Home.

At the following address: 09-03-228-023

Legal description of property: Buchanan’s Addition Coal City W57’ of E 114’ Lot 9 Block 7 Section 3-32-8.

Request for the above appeal was applied for by Anthony Olbro.

Said Board of appeals will be at said time and place to hear all persons in support of such matter or any objection thereof.

Persons may appear in person or by agent.

Dated this 26th day of August 2026.

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



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Eric D. Fisher, publisher

Darkness, cold, and mud- welcome to 1873

Will County in the 19th century had its pockets of crime and drunkenness, fighting and stabbing. But nothing in our history compares to early Braidwood. Why? Because, like the wild west, it was a mining town; it doesn't seem to matter whether its gold or coal. In 1873 Braidwood incorporated and none too soon. Let's go back to get the full picture.



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

"When'er I take my walks abroad mud, mud! At the present writing Braidwood is what I hope and believe to be the most dismal place ever seen by mortal. The streets and roads are, to the pedestrian, well-nigh impassable; and in their present condition, and are the cause of converting otherwise peaceful and solid citizens into vessels of wrath, who, with wailing and gnashing of teeth, shower maledictions upon the ruts, bogs, and quagmires which

up the curtain; enter city council, and exit mud."

That was the hope of the editor of the Braidwood Journal. He was a bit too optimistic; the mud would linger for quite a while. He was the inquisitive sort, so he decided to see exactly what it was like to be a miner.

"We were there on last Tuesday. Provided with a bodyguard, in the person of Mr. Wharton of the Joliet Republican, we proceeded to the Star coal mine in Braidwood. A gentlemanly foreman received us with every courtesy, and explained the various mysteries connected with harvesting the black diamonds. Wouldn't we like to go down the shaft? Of course, we would; so, Wharton acts on the suggestion of a miner, and doffs his plug hat, and we mount the cage, cautioning the engineer, by all his future hopes, to let us

beset them on every side. But the longest road has a turn. We are now incorporated, and by another winter shall mend our ways, and have the luxury of side-walks. So, ring

descend slowly. The engine bell strikes, and we begin to sink; one last look into the blue vault of heaven, and down, down we go - faster and faster, into the realms of darkness. After a rapid descent of eighty feet during which we grasp the cage as if for life itself, we alight at the bottom of the shaft, and Wharton takes a long breath in relief. Here truly is darkness, but without chaos. Several miniature railroads lead from the mouth of the shaft in different directions, and these have switch tracks diverging to all points of the compass. Here we learn to stoop and follow our guide, whose only light gleams from a miner's cap lamp, holding less than two ounces of oil.

We proceed quietly along the dark, damp hall, and stop occasionally to admire the well-defined walls of soapstone, in which is embedded many a beautiful fern. Further along, we come to tight board doors, which, our guide explains, are for the purpose of controlling the ventilation. After groping our way some 400 feet - sometimes walking erect, again on all fours - we spy a live miner, delving at the face of the strata of coal; he looks like an imp of his

Satanic majesty, crowned with a miner's lamp, and black as the heart of a salary-grabbing congressman. Who can he be?

In a moment he salutes us by name, and lo - we behold our friend and fellow citizen, James Creeley, one of the most popular ladies' men in Braidwood. The clever, black looking cuss talked United States fluently, and gave us much interesting information about things generally "down among the coals." How they pick out the bottom of a vein, when the natural pressure of the earth above loosens the whole; how one miner in each "room" or separate apartment has to shovel the coals to the track and load the small cars; how small boys or mules then push or pull these cars to the cage at the mouth of the shaft, when the whole is raised at a given signal, by the ponderous engine above.

After a sojourn of half an hour we "about face" and retrace our steps through the subterranean hall and soon catch a faint glimmer of daylight. Again at the shaft, we are led to expect a demand from the miners, requiring us to furnish a keg of beer, as is customary, but they probably suspected our newspaper



A TYPICAL "ROOM" in a shaft mine, taken in 1912 at the "G" shaft mine.

of a Bohemian character, and we were unmolested. Stepping upon the cage, the bell taps, and we ascend to Will County again.

Columns might be written, descriptive of our observations, but our remarks are limited to a certain space. Our conclusions are that a practical miner earns every cent he gets and that his vocation is one of the most danger-

ous pursuits on earth or below it."

Shaft mining had all but disappeared by the 1900's, soon to be replaced by strip mines with their huge machinery. Almost every remnant of those days has disappeared, but ask anyone from Braidwood, they will tell you that under the ground the shafts are still there, just waiting to cave in. Or so the story goes.

Senior Citizens gathering Sept. 2

Coal City United Methodist Church, located at 6805 E. McArde Road in Coal City, will hold their September senior citizens gathering on Wednesday, Sept. 2, from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m.

All seniors are invited to join them for devotions at 11 a.m., followed by lunch at 11:30 a.m. Activities will begin at 12:30 p.m. This is a free event.

If you are interested in attending, please contact the church office by noon on Monday, August 31, by calling the church office at 815-634-8670. In-town rides will be provided if needed, just let them know when you call to sign up. All senior citizens are welcome!



Courtesy photo

COAL CITY MIDDLE School has announced its first Students of the Week of the 2026-2027 school year. Each week during the academic year, middle school staff selected students to receive the weekly honor. Recognized for the week of Aug. 24 were [from left]: Blaise Doerfler, nominated by Mrs. Roseland; Brady Loghran, nominated by Coach Masters; Haileigh Caise, nominated by Mr. Peters, and Charlie Stott, nominated by Mr. Fatigante.

Coal City Public Library calendar

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

Check out our digital services available 24/7 on our website at www.ccpld.org. In-Person Adult Exercise, Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays 9-10 a.m. First half hour is cardio and the second half is weights, resistance band

and strength training.

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

Family Story and Play Time, 11 a.m. Join us for a short storytime with songs, and then we'll take out some of our toys to play with for the rest of the time. Each week we'll have a new theme and get out different toys to focus on different skills. No registration required.

Friday, Sept. 4
Mahjong, 1 p.m.
Gamer's Guild, 3:30 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 5
Wonder Kids, 10 a.m.
Monday, Sept. 7

Library closed for Labor Day
Tuesday, Sept. 8
Paper & More, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

CCPLD Board Meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.
Wednesday, Sept. 9
Senior Health Insurance Program, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Family Lapsit, 9:30 a.m. 3 months - 23 months and their caregiver can join us for stories, sensory activities, and songs with each week focusing on a different theme each month.

Preschool Storytime, 9:30 a.m.
Early Dismissal Fun Days, 11:45 a.m.-2 p.m.

The Early Exit Squad-4th thru 12th graders can join us in the Annex. Games and activities are from 1:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m. then pizza and a movie TBD on early dismissal day.

Augustana College dean's list

Augustana College announced more than 1,100 students were named to the Dean's List for the 2026 spring semester. Students who have earned this academic honor have maintained a grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a four-point scale for courses taken during the term.

Corinna Barkley, a Political Science and English major of Diamond; Braiden Young, a Kinesiology major and Dylan Young, a Engineering major, both of Coal City, were named to Augustana College dean's list.

Hall makes dean's list

Rachel Hall, of Coal City, a senior studying Early Childhood and Elementary at Concordia University in Wisconsin was named on the dean's list for the spring semester.

Cipolla requests property variance

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice of Public Hearing

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that the Village of Diamond will be holding a Public Hearing before the Planning and Zoning Board of the Village of Diamond at: Village Hall, 1750 E. Division Street, Diamond, Illinois On Tuesday, September 22, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. or soon thereafter as the matter may be heard

The purpose of the public hearing shall be to receive and consider testimony, public comment and other evidence pertaining to an application of Edwin & Alexis Cipolla (PZ-04-2026), for a variation of Section 151.015(A)(1) of the Diamond Code of Ordinances to permit a front yard setback of 12.86' feet rather than the required 30 feet and a corner side yard setback of 11.08' rather than the required 25' for a proposed addition, for the property commonly known as 180 S. Redmond Street, Diamond, IL 60416.

The property that is the subject of the above-referenced application is legally described as follows:
LOTS 19 AND 20 IN BLOCK TWENTY-FIVE FORDYCE'S ADDITION TO THE VILLAGE OF DIAMOND, IN GRUNDY COUNTY, ILLINOIS.
P.I.N.: 09-01-204-004

Persons desiring to view the actual documents in advance of the meeting may do so at the Village Hall during the hours of 7:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. Written comments on the proposed action may also be made by mail addressed to Cindy Haywood, Village of Diamond Planning and Zoning Board, 1750 E. Division Street, Diamond, Illinois 60416.

All persons interested in attending the public hearing are invited to do so, and will be heard. The meeting is open to persons with disabilities. Please contact the Village Hall at (815) 634-8149 if you require assistance in attending the public hearing.

The public hearing may be adjourned to another date or dates by public announcement thereof during the course of such public hearing.

This notice has been prepared at the direction of the Village of Diamond Planning and Zoning Board in accordance with the applicable laws of the State of Illinois and the ordinances of the Village of Diamond.

NOTICE IS HEREBY DATED THIS 2ND DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2026

FOR PUBLICATION.

Cindy Haywood
Planning & Zoning Secretary
Village of Diamond.

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

DeZee requests property variance

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice of Public Hearing

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that the Village of Diamond will be holding a Public Hearing before the Planning and Zoning Board of the Village of Diamond at: Village Hall, 1750 E. Division Street, Diamond, Illinois on Tuesday, September 22, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

The purpose of the public hearing shall be to receive and consider testimony, public comment and other evidence pertaining to an application of Heather DeZee (PZ-03-2026), for a variation of Section 151.015(A)(1) of the Diamond Code of Ordinances to permit a side yard setback of 3 feet rather than the required 7 feet for an above-ground swimming pool and access, for the property commonly known as 290 S. Will Road, Diamond, IL 60416 (Sterling Estates Subdivision Unit 1, Lot 6).

The property that is the subject of the above-referenced application is legally described as follows: THE NORTH 38.5 FEET OF LOT 6 IN STERLING ESTATES UNIT NO. 1, A SUBDIVISION OF PART OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF SECTION 1, TOWNSHIP 32 NORTH, RANGE 8 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN THE VILLAGE OF DIAMOND, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED MAY 14, 1998 AS DOCUMENT NO. 382565 P.I.N.: 09-01-229-025

Persons desiring to view the actual documents in advance of the meeting may do so at the Village Hall during the hours of 7:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. Written comments on the proposed action may also be made by mail addressed to Cindy Haywood, Village of Diamond Planning and Zoning Board, 1750 E. Division Street, Diamond, Illinois 60416.

All persons interested in attending the public hearing are invited to do so, and will be heard. The meeting is open to persons with disabilities. Please contact the Village Hall at (815) 634-8149 if you require assistance in attending the public hearing.

The public hearing may be adjourned to another date or dates by public announcement thereof during the course of such public hearing.

This notice has been prepared at the direction of the Village of Diamond Planning and Zoning Board in accordance with the applicable laws of the State of Illinois and the ordinances of the Village of Diamond.

NOTICE IS HEREBY DATED THIS 2ND DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2026

FOR PUBLICATION.

Cindy Haywood
Planning & Zoning Secretary
Village of Diamond.

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

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

IN THE MATTER OF

No. 63-TX-3895

MAINE TOWNSHIP DRAINAGE
AND LEVEE DISTRICT

DRAINAGE NOTICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christopher M. Dearth ARDC # 6305714
Law Offices of Christopher M. Dearth, P.C.
305 E North Street
Morris, Illinois 60450
(815) 941-4675
christopher.dearth@comcast.net

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

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www.freepressnewspapers.com, or call 815-634-0317. Please state the town in which you are calling from
or in regards to. Mail comments to Sound-Off, 271 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL 60416 or 111 S. Water St.,
Wilmington, IL 60481. There can be only one submission of 250 words or less per person.

Thieving idiots

COAL CITY—So brain surgeons in Springfield just passed a rate increase for tolls starting in 2027. It DOUBLES the current rate of .45 cents to .90 cents! And who gets the major blame for this? The incompetent and thieving idiots running the CTA. The CTA ran up millions in deficits and needed state help to bail them out. So the same brain surgeons that just passed the toll increase, said we will just take the gasoline taxes we collect and give it to the CTA. Problem solved. But the gas taxes are for fixing and repairing roads in IL. Not bailing out the CTA. That is how this state is run by liberal Democrats.

Stop Flock and Axon

WILMINGTON—The police and spy corporations have an ulterior motive to "educate" us on the "importance" of Flock and Axon spy devices." Private tech corporations have built a digital dragnet over our public streets. Every day, thousands of automated cameras log our license plates, map our daily routines, and track our vehicles based on color, make, and even bumper stickers. This information is funneled into interconnected law enforcement databases, allowing movements to be searched and tracked without a judicial warrant. This isn't speculative science fiction; it is a direct assault on our constitutional right to privacy. I resent funneling money into an increasingly militarized police force that spies on its citizenry. Enough with the police spying, "pit maneuvers" and playing judge, jury, and executioner. FLOCK AND AXON MUST BE STOPPED.

A load of malarkey

BRAIDWOOD—I was listening to the Braidwood council meeting on August 18. The police chief was yapping about how Flock cameras and license plate readers are NOT an invasion of privacy. And one of the councilmen said something about data centers being harmless and innocuous — that only "paranoid people" caught up in conspiracy theories worry. That's a load of BS, folks. As far as I'm concerned, the police chief either wasn't totally honest or he doesn't understand that Flock records simply don't — POOF! — vanish. When expired on the local level the information is uploaded into a central database and stored, but also sold to just about any corporation who wants personal information on people. And that's everyone, not just criminals. Data centers innocuous? Are you people crazy? A strain on utility grids, air pollution, noise pollution, light pollution, electronic waste, contributions to climate change - the list goes on. We all know politicians are looking to have their palms greased, but don't think the rest of us are stupid enough to fall for your load of malarkey.

A burning issue

BRAIDWOOD—The amount of burning complaints in Braidwood is absolutely absurd. I have a scanner and I think the fire department gets called at least 3-4 times a week for burning complaints. We are a

rural community, people are going to burn stuff, if you don't like it then maybe you people shouldn't have moved to a town like ours. Stop moving out of a community you dislike just to try and turn your new home into something you fled.

It's a double standard

MORRIS—I see the city of Morris is having their big beer fest over at Gould Park by the swimming pool area and there are signs up there no alcohol allowed in the park. I guess they just want it for the big politicians to make a big deal and raise money. I guess it's double standards for all the politicians, big wheels and show-offs in Morris. Also what's the big deal about the Catholic schools or private schools having the kids play football from one school to another. South Peru to Morris to play football. It's no big deal. Everybody wants a winning record, it's a double standard isn't it between Catholic and private. Everybody is just suppose to be quiet about all this stuff I guess. Money, money is a big deal, even in high school.

No worse than most

DIAMOND—Someone says Biden deserves credit for the Inflation Reduction Act and that is probably true. Although, in 2022 consumer prices rose to the highest in 40 years. Food was up 10.4%, energy prices increased 41.6% including gasoline that was up 59.9%, mortgage rates reached 7% and finally, investment totals dropped like a rock. I know this because I was there and I watch my portfolio closely. So, this all started under Biden and is why he had to create the act to save face. Now, are things better under Trump? They are better than the above numbers but I agree he is not doing so hot himself and his party will pay for it just like the last party did. I can say one thing no one can take from me. Even with Trump's stupid war that definitely rocked the economy in a negative way, my personal retirement portfolio has still skyrocketed immensely since January 1, 2026. Then the Epstein thing. Many people are guilty of that situation and Trump very well may be too. Although, why did this not come up during the last presidential election or during his first term? Because the Democrats just keep coming up with more and more crap and most of the past allegations are not sticking. I guess you have to give them credit for trying again and again. There are to many prestigious people in those files that will make sure they are never released, both Democrats and Republicans. Trump is no worse than most other politicians at that level as they all came up the ranks the same way. I found a magazine from the 1980's in my attic that had a political article inside. You know, the politicians at that level now are saying all the same things as they did back then. The only things that has changed are the names.

Flock stalkers

ELWOOD—On Aug. 27, I came across an article about an officer on the village of Channahon Police Department on administrative leave from work as a result of a



Flock camera investigation. A Joliet officer has also been put on leave for cyber stalking a female officer. Flock cameras and other spyware promote crimes against women, making it easy to stalk and find personal information. Since male police officers have a higher than normal rate of domestic abuse and aggression in general, Flock is bad idea.

Vote for your family

WILMINGTON—On June 18, 2026 Donald J. Trump bought approximately \$500,000 worth of stock in Boeing. What a coincidence that on the same June 18, 2026 the United States Dept. of Defense awarded Boeing a contract valued at \$880,000,000. How's your spending at the Dollar Store doing? Vote for your family this time, swallow that pride. We all make mistakes.

Against the law

BRAIDWOOD—When is the Reed Custer School District going to start cracking down on these youth sporting organizations that use their facilities? Specifically on the parents who consistently smoke or vape on school grounds? Just take a walk around the field perimeter fence during a youth football game and you'll smell smoke from cigarettes and vapes. Why are they allowed to get away with this? I thought using tobacco products or vapes on school grounds was against state law?

He wants data centers

WILMINGTON—In case you were not aware of Donald Trump's complete and utter allegiance to building data centers in every community in America he reiterated it again on Sunday. Your electricity bill, water supply and quiet serenity of life is fully being destroyed by Donald J. Trump. So all you backers of this guy be aware again he wants billionaire owned data cen-

ters throughout every town. Enjoy your vote even more, you intentionally voted for him.

Nix with the fireworks

BRAIDWOOD—Hey, if Braidwood wants to be fancy like Naperville and have a city center and splash pad they should also follow suit and enforce the no fireworks ordinance. They, the morons started shooting them off in April and it's still going on at the end of August. People are sick of hearing it and the mayor of Braidwood needs to man up and do his job and do something good for this community. As far as a lot of people here are concerned, Lyons picked up where Altiery left off. He's no better. Do your job, police included, and by the way, Naperville started issuing fines starting at \$750.

Half-mast not right

WILMINGTON—I feel very bad that we lost Dolly Parton and when my daughter was nine years old that was the first 45 record she bought, Islands in the Stream with Dolly and Kenny Rogers. But the president giving the order that flags be at half-mast was totally wrong. Does that mean when Garth Brooks, Willie Nelson, Clint Eastwood, John Travolta Al Pacino or any celebrity passes away that all the flags will be at half mast? When Whitney Houston passed away the governor of New Jersey ordered the flags will be lowered at half-mast. Does that mean when Bruce Springstein and John Bon Jovi pass away the flags will be at half- mast? In my opinion, and I know that doesn't mean a lot, I think that the flag at the top of the Capitol should be flown at half-mast and remain that way in honor of all first responders and all the military people who gave their lives for their cities and countries. I doubt this will ever happen but I feel it would be a great tribute. Sherry Michaels

Demand for free books jumps with passing of Dolly Parton

The Imagination Library of Will County has experienced an influx in enrollments for children to receive free books in the mail following the passing of the national program's founder, Dolly Parton.

The local program is urging that parents be patient as both the online registration system and local volunteers manage the high level of traffic.

"Dolly Parton's legendary life has positively impacted millions and inspired us to make a difference in the lives of others," said Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, who partnered with the Will County Center for Economic Development to launch the program locally.

"We've been heartened by the increase in donations and enrollments for the program over the last few days and ask for patience as we manage the increase in interest."

The Imagination Library is the signature program of the Dollywood Foundation, a nonprofit organization

founded by Dolly Parton in 1988.

Since launching in 1995, the Imagination Library has become the pre-eminent early childhood book-gifting program in the world.

The Will County program launched in July 2025, allowing local families to register for free, high-quality, and age-appropriate books mailed directly to their children from birth until their fifth birthday.

Since then, over 8,800 children have been enrolled in the program.

Since the news of Parton's passing on August 26, over 350 children have been enrolled in the program. This coincides with a growing national interest in the program, which has caused high traffic and delays on the online registration system managed by the Dollywood Foundation.

Parents can learn more and register for the program by visiting WillCountyImaginationLibrary.org.

Individual sponsorships can also be made online to sponsor children enrolled in the program.

What goes up, might (or might not) come down

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have fallen 12.4 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$4.23/g Monday, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Prices in Illinois are 11.8 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 73.0 cents per gallon higher than a year ago.

If you hurry, you might catch gas under \$4/g this week.

For example, Mohsen in Wilmington is charging \$3.98/g, but expect to pay up to \$4.14/g at Shell.

Braidwood gas is \$4.23/g at Casey's up to \$4.29/g at Marathon.

Coal City's Gas N Wash is offering gas at \$4.23/g, but gas will cost you

\$4.49/g at Shell.

In Morris, expect to pay anywhere from \$3.99/g at Casey's all the way up to \$4.49/g at Shell.

Bourbonnais stations are charging anywhere from \$4.09/g at Casey's, up to \$4.49/g at Speedway.

"Average gasoline prices fell in slightly more than half of states over the last week while diesel declined in roughly half, as oil prices moved lower and offered some modest relief at the pump," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"Over the weekend, the Trump administration struck a major deal with Venezuela, a signal that the White House remains concerned about elevated fuel

prices — though in reality, any benefits from increased Venezuelan output will take years to fully materialize and are unlikely to move the needle in the near term.

The factors with the most immediate impact on where prices go from here remain the ongoing developments between the U.S. and Iran and continued Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries, both of which continue to exert outsized influence on global fuel markets. Motorists should expect continued volatility in the weeks ahead."

The lowest price in the state Monday was \$3.49/g while the highest was \$5.69/g.

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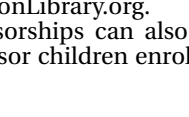
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Are pets bad for the enviroment?

Dear EarthTalk: Is owning a cat or dog bad for the planet?
-Missy Teahan, Acton, MA

EARTH TALK
Questions & Answers About Our Environment

While all cat and dog owners know the financial and time costs of caring for a pet, many do not know about or consider the environmental costs.

As almost one-third of all households on Earth own at least one dog and nearly one-fourth of all households own at least one cat, the environmental effects of these pets have become incredibly significant and impactful globally.

Specifically, an average-sized cat produces around 310 kilograms of carbon dioxide annually, while an average-sized dog produces 770 kilograms.

One impactful factor of this phenomenon is pet food production. As pets often depend on other animals' protein as food to survive, producing pet food requires farming animals like cattle and poultry.

This production adds

up; in America, the production of dog and cat food leads to around 390 kilograms of climate pollution annually per animal, a number that is worsened by many pet food companies neglecting sustainable pet food ingredient sourcing.

Beyond production, the overall consumption of pet food contributes to climate pollution. In fact, one quarter of the environmental impacts of U.S. meat production are tied to pet food, taking into account the use of land, water, phosphates, pesticides, and fossil fuels, according to UCLA geographer Gregory Okin.

While some cat owners have tried to opt for a vegan diet, Alexandra Whittaker, an associate Professor at the School of Animal and Veterinary Science at the University of Adelaide, stated, "One challenge that isn't really addressed in this paper is how a vegan diet should be safely put together. Previous studies have shown cats on vegan diets to have severe deficiency disorders affecting the muscles."

The environmental effects of pets are also exacerbated by the lack of conscious decision-making from pet owners. For instance, many owners do not think twice about purchasing from breeders, as they do not consider how



OWNING A PET might be good for the pet, but not necessarily for the environment.

this contributes to overpopulation and can increase the impact of pet food production or animal care costs in animal shelters.

Similarly, many of the pet toys that owners purchase are made with toxic dyes, and the pet waste that owners do not pick up can spread deadly parasites to wildlife.

Fortunately, there are various things you can do to mitigate these negative environmental effects. Owners could opt for sustainable food alternatives, such as pet food brands certified by the Aquaculture Stewardship Council or the Marine

Stewardship Council, which indicate that the protein in this food is caught legally and produced responsibly, or insect-based food, which has a smaller carbon footprint.

Pet owners should also manage waste responsibly to avoid spreading toxins to wildlife and to reduce plastic pollution by decreasing the number of unnecessary purchases. With these measures, pet owners can significantly reduce the carbon footprint of their pets.

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

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Electronics dropoff in Wilmington

Will County's next free electronics drop-off event will be held Thursday, Sept. 10, from 5-7 p.m. at the Wilmington City Hall parking lot, 1165 S. Water St.

Participants are reminded to remain in their vehicles, show ID by holding it to the window for staff to see and then allow staff to remove items without assistance from each vehicle.

Items accepted include: Televisions, monitors, printers, computers (desktops, laptops, notebooks, tablets), electronic keyboards, fax machines, videocassette recorders, portable digital music players, DVD players, DVD recorders, video game consoles, small scale servers, scanners, electronic mice, digital converter boxes, cable receivers, satellite receivers, cell phones, computer cable, portable digital assistants (PDAs) and zip drives.

Electronic items contain materials that can be recycled countless times while other materials in items are considered hazardous.

Scrap metal like pots and pans, baking sheets, car jacks, chains, keys, copper pipe and wire, door knobs silverware and more.



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OBITUARIES

George Reader

DIAMOND—George M. Reader, 90, of Diamond, passed away on Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2026 at the Gardens at Park Pointe in Morris. He was born on March 11, 1936 in Mazon, to George L. and Mildred (nee Brooks) Reader. He grew up in the Mazon area and attended Gardner schools. George married Joan Mallaney on March 13, 1965. He worked for the Papermill for several years then worked as a process operator at Lyondell for 19 years until his retirement.

A proud citizen of the town he settled in, he became known as “Diamond George.” Even when he could no longer drive, George would ride his scooter to the Whistle Stop restaurant twice a day for coffee and to socialize. He enjoyed his yard and flowers and was happy to share the fruits of his labor in his vegetable garden with family and friends. George was known to be a veteran card player. He would convince family to play Euchre saying “Let’s play 2 out of 3” ...but the games would always turn into many more. He also loved playing Rummy with his grandchildren. An active man, George took pleasure in fishing and camping with his family and friends.

He is survived by his daughters: Denise (Clay) Webb, Millie (Dave) Henderson, Buffy (Jeff) Blanton; his son, George A. (Cara) Reader; his step-daughters: Cindy Born, Debbie (Dean) Marketti and Carol (Neil) Krull; his grandchildren:

Brandy (Joe) Scheer, Briana (Eric) Franciskovich, Shane Webb, Sandy Haddon, Molly (Tony), Ryan (Kasia), Kailee, Mark (Taylor), Jack (Angelina), Lauren, Megan, Allison, Alaina, Maci and Cade; several great-grandchildren and his brother-in-law, William Weaver. Several nieces and nephews also survive.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 50 years, Joan Reader in 2015 and his brothers and sisters: Roy (Berniece) Reader, Kenneth (Vivian) Reader, Rita (Glen) Oakland, Vivian (Harry) Burke, Wanda (Buck) Peterson, Viola (Donald) Shoemaker, Shirley Weaver, and infant brother Donald Reader.

Memorial donation may be made to the Coal City United Methodist Church, 6801 East McArdle Road, Coal City, IL 60416.

Visitation will be from 1:00 pm until 4:00 pm on Sunday, Aug. 30, 2026 at the Ferrari Funeral Chapel, 1044 Ferrari Drive, Coal City, IL 60416.

Funeral Service will be at 10:00 am on Monday, Aug. 31, 2026, also at the Ferrari Funeral Chapel with Pastor Bradley Watkins officiating. Burial will follow at Braceville Gardner Cemetery.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guestbook at www.ferrari-funeral.com.

Ferrari Funeral Services of Coal City are entrusted with arrangements.



Catherine T. Ferrari

COAL CITY—Catherine T. Ferrari, 78, of Coal City, passed away peacefully at her home, surrounded by her loved ones on Saturday, Aug. 29, 2026.

She was born on June 30, 1948 in Joliet to Leonard and Phyllis (nee Kodat) Fioritto. She grew up in Coal City, graduating from Coal City High School class of 1966 and continued to get together for lunch with her classmates. Cathie married her partner in life, Robert L. Ferrari, in 1972. Together they raised two sons. Cathie owned Ferrari Accounting, retiring after 40 years. She was a devoted mom and grandmother.

She is survived by her two sons, Greg Ferrari and Glenn (Becki) Ferrari; her three grandchildren: Lauren (Conner Huston) Ferrari, Ethan and Olivia Ferrari; her siblings: Leonard (the late Maureen) Fioritto, Mary (Jerry Meece) Trevino and Theresa (Richard) Willis; her caretaker, Carol Judy

and numerous nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 47 years, Bob Ferrari; her parents, Phyllis and Leonard Fioritto; and her daughter-in-law, Kim Ferrari.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Cathie’s name may be directed to the Alzheimer’s Association or the charity of the donor’s choice.

Visitation will be from 9 a.m. until the time of the Funeral Service at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2026 at the Ferrari Funeral Chapel, 1044 Ferrari Drive, Coal City, IL 60416. Deacon William Dunn will officiate. Burial will follow at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guestbook at www.ferrari-funeral.com.

Ferrari Funeral Services of Coal City are entrusted with arrangements.



Editorial

Flock cameras promise high-tech safety, but who is watching the watchers?

Wilmington Mayor Ben Dietz deserves credit for doing something many elected officials avoid: Stepping into a controversy, inviting public discussion about Flock Safety cameras tonight at 6 p.m. at Wilmington City Hall, 1165 S. Water St., Wilmington.

That’s a great start. But transparency is not the same thing as accountability.

The debate over Flock cameras is not really about whether they’re effective at solving crimes. Virtually every surveillance technology ever introduced has been sold on the premise of keeping the citizenry safe.

The question is whether the benefits justify a system capable of recording, storing and tracking the movements of law-abiding citizens.

Government surveillance rarely comes to town wearing a villain’s mask. It arrives wrapped in public safety campaigns and assurances that only criminals need to worry.

Despite assurances, Dietz’s announcement, led to a social media frenzy, with more than 150 comments on his post. Residents are raising questions about how much surveillance is too much. What happens when today’s safeguards become tomorrow’s loopholes? People worry personal information is being sold.

One commenter argued that automated license plate readers create a searchable database capable of reconstructing months of travel patterns of those who have not committed a crime. When enough data is assembled, authorities can determine where someone worships, what political meetings they attend, what medical specialists they visit and where they spend their evenings.

Officials and supporters typically respond with: “If you’re not doing anything wrong, you have nothing to hide.”

That argument has

always missed the point. Privacy is not about hiding wrongdoing. It is about maintaining personal autonomy in a so-called free society.

Sharing information

The ACLU and other groups warn that Flock Safety vehicle records may potentially be sold or shared to outside groups.

In Texas, deputies used Flock data to investigate a woman suspected of traveling out of state to have an abortion.

According to the ACLU, Flock Safety’s Terms and Condition (T&C) prior to Feb. 2026 stated “Flock does not own and shall not sell Customer Data.” That language is now absent from the corporation’s terms and conditions.

Further, updated T&C grants the corporation a “perpetual” right to use customer data to “support and improve” its services.

Misuse of data

Horror stories abound about law enforcement using Flock data for nefarious purposes, such as stalking a “love interest,” have been increasing.

Last week, a Channahon police officer was placed on paid administrative leave after an internal audit allegedly revealed unauthorized use of the department’s Flock system.

Village officials said the alleged violation was discovered through the department’s own auditing procedures and that additional oversight tools have since been implemented.

The Channahon incident illustrates precisely why residents are revolting. Surveillance systems are operated and accessed by human beings. Every system that collects information carries the risk that someone will misuse it.

Good vs Evil

Nor is Channahon an isolated case. Across the country, officers have been accused of using Flock systems to monitor former romantic partners,

acquaintances, and private citizens without legitimate law-enforcement purposes.

Recent investigations in Georgia, Texas, Massachusetts, and Florida have resulted in suspensions, resignations, criminal investigations, and renewed concerns about oversight.

Supporters frequently point to child abductions, violent offenders, and stolen vehicles to justify spy cameras. One social media commenter challenged that reasoning, arguing that extreme cases should not automatically justify permanent surveillance.

Justification

So, should society build systems around the rarest and most extreme scenarios, or should it evaluate whether the daily costs to privacy are proportional to the actual threats facing a community?

Residents have reasonably asked whether local crime levels justify a surveillance network. One commenter questioned whether small towns face enough serious crime for these cameras to be a decisive factor in investigations.

Too often, discussions about surveillance become trapped between two false choices: Either support every new law-enforcement tool or be labeled anti-police.

Safety without surveillance

The reality is more nuanced. Citizens can support their police department while opposing expanded surveillance powers. They can want safe streets without accepting that every movement should be recorded and searchable.

Once surveillance infrastructure is built, it rarely shrinks. Databases expand. Information sharing increases. New uses emerge. Future leaders inherit tools they never had to justify creating.

Most residents have little understanding of exactly what information is being collected, how long it is retained, who can access it or how broadly it is shared.

If public trust is the goal, residents deserve clear and detailed answers about what data is being gathered, where it goes, who sees it and when it is ultimately deleted.

History reveals Americans have repeatedly been assured that surveillance powers would be limited, temporary and carefully controlled. Time and again, Americans have been betrayed.

Let’s hope that with Flock cameras, that’s not the case.



RUNNERS LINE UP on the start line during Morris Hospital's 2025 Corn Fest 5K Run. This year's race takes place on Sept. 26 from Morris Grade School.

Registration underway for Morris Hospital Corn Fest 5K

Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers will host its annual Corn Fest 5K as part of the Grundy County Corn Festival on Saturday, Sept. 26, with runners taking off from Morris Grade School, 2001 Dupont Ave., Morris.

The race begins at 9 a.m. and is preceded by a Youth Fun Run for children 10 and under beginning at 8:15 a.m.

The registration fee is \$30 through Sept. 24. Race day registration is \$35 per person. The first 300 pre-registered 5K participants will receive a t-shirt available in unisex adult sizes.

The 3.1 mile USATF certified course starts on Dupont Avenue in front of Morris Grade School and winds through residential neighborhoods. Awards will be presented to the top three overall male and female finishes, as well as the top 3 male and female finishers in each age group.

The Youth Fun Run is \$10 per child whether registering in advance or on race day. Children ages 6-10 will run a half mile course around the grounds of the school starting at 8:15 a.m., followed by a 100 yard run for children 5 and under at 8:30 a.m. Children reg-

istered for the Youth Fun Run will receive a short sleeve cotton t-shirt available in youth sizes only.

Online registration is available now through Sept. 24 at raceroster.com/100810 or by going to morrishospital.org/events and clicking on the Special Events category for the link to Race Roster.

After Sept. 24, participants may register in person on race day at Morris Grade School between 7:30-8:45 a.m. For more information, call the Morris Hospital Wellness office at 815-705-7358.

Hit the road to join in the Pork Tenderloin Crawl

Food lovers are invited to hit the road this fall as the Illinois Pork Producers Association launches the 2026 Illinois Pork Tenderloin Crawl, a self-guided culinary adventure celebrating one of the Midwest’s most iconic sandwiches while encouraging travelers to discover locally owned restaurants across Illinois.

Running now through Nov. 30, the crawl features restaurants serving their own take on the classic breaded pork tenderloin sandwich. Participants who visit at least eight of the 11 featured locations will earn an exclusive Illinois Pork Tenderloin Crawl T-shirt, and everyone who completes a passport will be entered for a chance to win a \$50 gift card.

This year’s featured restaurants include: Buford’s Pub, Sadorus; River’s Edge Inn, Dixon; Route 66 Motorheads, Springfield; The Dirty Bird, Sycamore; Cindy Bs Café, Murphysboro; Meadow Avenue Tap, East Peoria; LJs Garden Café, Magnolia; Beecher City Pit Stop, Beecher City; The Parkview Inn, Bloomington; Babes on Plum, Havana and The Patio, Jacksonville.

The crawl includes

two restaurants recognized by Illinois pork fans during the 2025 Illinois Best Pork Tenderloin contest. Buford’s Pub in Sadorus earned the title of Illinois’ Best Pork Tenderloin, while River’s Edge Inn in Dixon claimed the runner-up spot, making both must-visit destinations for sandwich enthusiasts.

Participants can complete the crawl using either a printed passport or a digital passport by scanning a QR code available at each participating restaurant.

Digital participants will upload a photo of both their menu and pork tenderloin sandwich at each stop to verify their visit.

Beyond celebrating a beloved sandwich, the crawl recognizes the Illinois pig farmers whose commitment to raising high-quality pork helps make these local favorites possible. Their dedication provides restaurants across the state with the wholesome, flavorful pork that has become a staple on Illinois menus.

Learn about the unsolved murders of Grimes sisters

Step into one of Chicago’s most infamous and haunting unsolved mysteries. In December 1956, sisters, Barbara and Patricia Grimes disappeared after leaving a movie theater, and their murders remain unsolved to this day.

Explore the details of the case, the investigation, and the many theories that have emerged over the years. New information and renewed interest continue to fuel the search for answers to this enduring mystery.

Raymond Johnson,

also known as the “History Cop”, will present the program. A former police officer, military instructor, historian, researcher, and author, Johnson has spent more than 17 years teaching genealogical and historical research.

He has also been featured on programs including American Ripper, Mysteries at the Museum, and A Crime to Remember.

Register for the event to be held Wednesday, Sept. 23, at 6 p.m. at the Wilmington Public Library District. Registration is required.

Program on learning your family history from a DNA test

Have you taken a DNA test and wondered what your results can tell you about your family history?

Learn how to understand your DNA matches, explore your family history, and use your results to make meaningful genealogical discoveries.

Whether you are just getting started or looking to get more from your DNA test, this presentation will help you take the next step

with confidence.

It will be presented by Michelle Wilson, an experienced genetic genealogist and educator known for making complex DNA concepts easy to understand.

Attend the program Saturday, Sept. 12, at 1 p.m. at the Wilmington Public Library District. Sign up to register by stopping by the library, 201 S. Kankakee St. or calling 815-476-2834.

Apples ripen for early picking season in Illinois

BY RHIANNON BRANCH
FARMWEEK

Apples are ready for picking at some Illinois orchards, marking an early harvest.

"Due to the early bloom and warm temperatures this summer, harvest is running at least several days to a week earlier than most years," Molly Christ with Christ Orchard in Elmwood told FarmWeek.

They began picking the first of more than 60 varieties of apples in late July and will offer U-pick apples later this month.

"Despite the close calls we had this spring with the freezing temperatures, we still have a bumper crop of apples," Christ said. "A few apples have frost rings, or rough patches on the skin. This is a type of russetting that does not affect the flesh or taste."

Apple varieties are also maturing about 10 days ahead of schedule at Liberty Apple Orchard in Edwardsville.

Owner Stephen Miller said the early bloom in late March was a driving factor.

"The only other year with a bloom in late March was back in 2012 and then it was followed by a deep freeze in April that just decimated the apple crop here in Illinois," Miller recalled. "Fortunately, this year we had an early bloom, but we also had a fairly warm April, so we didn't have that problem."

Most of their varieties look plentiful with good quality, especially the Honeycrisps.

"The trees are loaded with Honeycrisp. It looks gorgeous. They have a lot of color and a lot of sizing that we haven't seen in the last couple of years, so we're

very optimistic that there'll be a good season," he said.

Miller calls himself an "encore-preneur" having planted his first apple trees in 2008 after retiring from his career. Now he has about 1,000 trees growing 21 different varieties for people to pick. Liberty Apple Orchard also sells at three farmer's markets in southwestern Illinois and eastern Missouri.

"I think this could be the best year we have ever had for apples," Miller said. "Last year was a very good year for us, but this year looks very promising."

Around 545 farms grow more than 2,200 acres of apples in Illinois each year, according to the 2022 Census of Agriculture.

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](#).

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Photo by Rhiannon Branch of FarmWeek

APPLES WERE BEGINNING to turn red in late July at Eckert's in Belleville.

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Left to right: Samantha Olson, Kelly Olson, Dr. Garrett B. Smith, Grace Smith, Sherry Yakima, Dayna Vargocko. Not pictured: Alea Vargocko and Sara Daniels

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GOOD FAITH DONATION

Teacher unions demand all of Meta settlement funds

Hours after the social media giant Meta agreed last Wednesday to settle a case brought by 47 state attorneys general and implement reforms to protect children from social media harms, the Illinois Federation of Teachers issued a demand that all of Illinois' portion of the \$17.1 billion settlement - \$768 million - be designated "to address the funding crisis for school districts across the state."



CAPITOL FACTS
 Rich Miller

"The Governor has said he supports more funding for education but didn't know where it would come from," said IFT president Stacy Davis Gates in the release. "The settlement with Meta just made that answer even easier. Schools from Peoria to Belleville to Chicago are counting on the Governor and the General Assembly to prioritize students the way we've seen them prioritize big tech and billionaire stadium owners."

The Chicago Teachers Union, which is part of the IFT, is demanding that the state come up with \$165 million during the upcoming fall veto session to prevent layoffs at the Chicago Public Schools. A statewide package that helps Chicago and the rest of the state would amount to hundreds of millions of dollars more.

But the \$768 million from the settlement is obviously not a permanent revenue source. So, I asked the IFT why the state should use temporary money to fund long-term education funding. After all, CPS got itself in big fiscal trouble by using short-term federal COVID funding to pay for long-term school spending. That fateful budgetary decision brought the school district directly to the brink it faces today.

"Permanent solutions of course are better," conceded an IFT spokesperson, pointing to work being done by progressive legislators and stakeholders to find permanent state revenue sources. However, the spokesperson said via email, "if the state is receiving \$768M for the harm big tech companies have done to children, sure makes sense to put it toward the educational institutions that serve them."

Except underfunded schools is not the problem that the settlement money is designed to address. According to the settlement terms, the cash is supposed to be used for "remedial or restitutive purposes."

Those purposes include: Youth crisis intervention services; after school or summer pro-

grams; digital awareness public education funds; implementing phone-free school zones; hiring digital literacy counselors; digital mental health programming and "grants to school districts or other local government entities to accomplish any remedial purpose encompassed here."

The money is also supposed to be used to reimburse the attorney general's office for costs associated with bringing the lawsuit.

The Children's Funding Project in partnership with the Afterschool Alliance has even developed model legislation designed to help states spend the money to directly address the harms done by Meta under the auspices of its Fund IRL coalition.

A statement from the group said it and its coalition partners "will continue to work to ensure that every available dollar intended to repair harm to young people is tracked, and that state leaders hear directly from young people and the organizations serving them as decisions about those resources are made."

Attorney General Kwame Raoul's office emphasized to me that the money should mainly be used for remediation of the harms done to children by Meta and other large social media companies.

AG Raoul's office also insisted that the money cannot be used for General Revenue purposes, but

should instead be treated like the massive opioid settlement for targeted remediation of the harms caused by the industry, instead of the way the legislature and previous governors used the tobacco settlement money to temporarily patch state budget holes back in the day.

The point here is that the IFT and CTU shouldn't be pouncing on every bright, shiny nickel that bounces into the playing field. The union absolutely must have the support of progressive legislators if it has even a little hope of eventually finding a funding solution. Demanding the Meta money be diverted from other significant progressive priorities for its own purposes will only undermine its goals. This ain't rocket science.

I really think sometimes that the CTU and the Chicago Bears are operating from the same flawed, secret playbook. Both have legit cases to make at the Statehouse, but both constantly step on their own messaging and alienate people who should be their friends.

The Meta settlement will provide some money to CPS and all other school districts. But if the IFT sticks to its guns and insists that the legislature ignore the settlement terms and give them all of the cash, things could get really ugly.

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

Resources available for food, meals

With more families being affected by SNAP program cutbacks, anyone in need of supplement food or meals can get help from the following organizations.

The Christian Life Assembly, 2960 E Division St Diamond, offers a food pantry Tuesday 2:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Wednesday 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Friday 9:00 a.m. to noon. By appointment only 815-

578-5441. Braidwood Food Pantry at Community Care Center. Open Tuesdays 8 to 11:45 a.m. 112 S. Center Street, Braidwood. Info: 815-325-0779

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

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

Coal City Food Pantry at Coal City United Methodist Church. (Use south entrance) Closed all Federal holidays. Open Mondays 9-11 a.m. and Thursdays 1-3 p.m. 6805 E. McArdle Road, Coal City.

Information: 815-216-3288.

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

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

Local Meals
 St. Vincent Table Hot Meals. Coordinators Cindi Grove 815-735-1432 and Laura Marizza 815-325-8605. Hours for pickup for

shut ins 4:00-4:30 p.m. Dine in hours 4:30 until 5:30 p.m.

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

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

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

Braidwood blood drive scheduled for September 17

The City of Braidwood will host its next community blood drive on Thursday, Sept. 17, from 2 to 6 p.m. in the meeting room at Braidwood City Hall, 141 W. Main Street.

Pre-registration is highly recommended, although walk-in donors will also be accepted.

To register, please visit the online registration link provided by the city or con-

tact Blood Drive Coordinator Josh Bolatto at (815) 458-2342 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

As part of Versiti's September donor promotion, individuals who donate blood will be entered into the Fire Up Your Team Sweepstakes for a chance to win a Chicago Fire FC VIP Team Experience. Participants must be at least 18-years-old to be eligible for the sweepstakes.

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AT THE RECENT Agrivoltaics Field Day, University of Illinois plant breeding, genetics and bioenergy crop agronomist DoKyoung "D.K." Lee discusses how solar panel shade impacts crops.

Photo by April Wendling, University of Illinois

What to know about farming with solar panels

BY PHYLLIS COULTER
FARMWEEK

Researchers at the University of Illinois brought to light lessons learned about growing crops in the shade of solar panels at the Agrivoltaics Field Day at the Illinois energy farm Aug. 5.

"There's a lot of interest in agrivoltaics," DoKyoung "D.K." Lee, a U of I plant breeding, genetics and bioenergy crop agronomist, told FarmWeek of people wanting to know more about the dual use of land for solar energy production and agriculture. "It's not only about agronomic practices, but also economics."

Sorting out shade impact

Some agrivoltaic research at the farm focuses on how shade affects crop yield. In three years of study, research shows shade caused by solar panels can reduce soybean yields by about half.

However, for grain sorghum, "the yield penalty was minimal as the greater kernel size compensated the lower grain numbers," Lee said.

Based on the recent harvest of winter wheat, Lee said the grain yield was reduced by about 40% due

to shading in the rows directly under the panel, compared with wheat in full sun. The impact of shade on crops also depends on the arrangement of the solar panels, he noted.

The research is part of the Sustainably Co-locating Agricultural and Photovoltaic Electricity Systems project, which aims to blend agriculture and solar power in a way to boost U.S. farmers' resilience and income while maintaining food production and ramping up renewable energy.

While modern commercial-sized equipment cannot be used in the trials with solar panels, small equipment can, "but you have to be careful,"

Lee said. For the arrangement of 20 feet between the panels, a four-row planter can be used with 10 feet of plantable space, and for 40 feet arrangement, a 12-row planter can be used with 30 feet plantable space.

Some testing was done at the U of I energy farm and some at a utility-scale solar farm. The research also involves row crops including soybeans, grain sorghum, winter wheat and horticulture crops including tomatoes and greens,

but not field corn because of its height.

In 2024, researchers added forage crops, including alfalfa, red clover, orchard grass, tall fescue and timothy grass. Forage may be one of the more practical options for larger-scale production on a solar farm, Lee said. When growing forages, some researchers and farmers include livestock, often sheep. "We aren't able to accommodate livestock in research here," he said, but noted the combination may be more profitable.

Other research focuses on the impact the solar panels have on soil quality, carbon intensity and potential for heavy metal contamination.

"We haven't seen any heavy metal in the soil," Lee noted.

Current funding of the five-year project ends this year, but Lee hopes it will be extended because there is more work to be done.

"As we produce electricity on the farm, we need to know the consequences for benefits from the practice," he added.

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](https://www.farmweeknow.com).

Seated Yoga at the Forest Preserve

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

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

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Mobile food pantry coming Monday to So. Wilmington

Catholic Charities' Mobile Food Pantry will be distributing food on Monday, Sept. 21 and Oct. 19 from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at St. Lawrence Church (135 Rice Road in South Wilmington) in the church parking lot (rain or shine).

Catholic Charities and the Northern Illinois Food Bank have partnered to deliver nutritious food (meat, produce and non-perishable items) to people in need.

Participants are asked to stay in their cars. The Mobile Food Pantry will use a "drive thru" method to distribute pre-packed groceries.

You do not have to be Catholic to participate. Catholic Charities helps people of all faiths and beliefs. For more information about Catholic Charities, please visit catholiccharitiesjoliet.org.

U of I students earn degrees

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has announced 12,174 degrees and certificates awarded for the 2026 spring semester.

Local students include: Annika Marchi of Braceville, Cougar Forsythe, Drake Imhof, Kyndal Smolenski and Tyler Willis all of Wilmington.



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- You must have the vehicle title or be able to prove ownership.
- This program is completely voluntary.
- **Do not wait!** Once a Code Enforcement case has been initiated and a citation has been issued for a junk or inoperable vehicle, Broadway Auto Salvage will not purchase the vehicle through this program.
- The City of Wilmington will continue enforcing all applicable property maintenance and junk vehicle ordinances throughout the program period.

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Wilmington
THE ISLAND CITY ILLINOIS

Putting on the brakes

New Illinois law establishes rules for e-bikes, scooters

BY BEN SZALINSKI
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

New rules governing who can use electric bikes and scooters, including where and how fast they go, will go into effect next year following Gov. JB Pritzker's signature last week.

Pritzker signed Senate Bill 3484 which establishes regulations on "micromobility" transportation that include age requirements, speed limits and rules on where they can be operated. The bill takes effect Jan. 1.

The bill passed both chambers with bipartisan support on June 1 following several amendments throughout the spring session.

The new law was one of Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias' top priorities during the legislative session. The Chicago mayoral candidate said unregulated micromobility devices have become a problem.

"As these high-powered devices become faster and more common on our streets and sidewalks, the stakes are simply too high to leave them unregulated and outpacing public safety," Giannoulias said in a statement. "This law brings accountability and common-sense safety standards to our roads while helping prevent serious injuries and ensuring riders, parents and communities understand how to safely share the road."

The state already has some regulations for low-speed electric bikes and scooters, but regulation often varies at the

local level. The bill creates new statewide standards for high-speed electric bikes and scooters, electric motor bikes, and electric unicycles and skateboards.

"Municipal leaders have been responding in real time as new electric devices appear on local streets, sidewalks and bike paths," Illinois Municipal League CEO Brad Cole said in a statement. "A statewide framework gives communities greater consistency while providing local officials and law enforcement with clearer guidance."

Law enforcement groups were also in support of the bill.

What's changing

It creates a new tier of regulations for "high-speed" e-bikes, which have electric motors and can travel faster than 28 mph. Those would be regulated similarly to motorcycles and require users to have a driver's license, insurance, an ownership title and register the vehicle with the state. They also must be driven on roads.

"Low-speed" e-bikes are already regulated by the state, but the law creates new tiers that govern how old a person must be to drive them.

Drivers must be 15 years old to operate a Class 1 pedal-assist bike that travels up to 20 mph, such as Chicago's Divvy Bikes, and a Class 2 motor-powered bike that doesn't have to be pedaled. People must be 16 years old to drive pedal-assist bikes that can travel up to 28 mph.

All low-speed e-bikes can be used on streets, bike lanes, paths and trails, but not

on sidewalks.

Some high-speed electric scooters can reach speeds of 50 mph, but the new regulations limit riders to traveling up to 28 mph. Riders would be allowed to operate them on paths, bike lanes, roads with speed limits up to 35 mph, or roads with higher speed limits if there is a bike lane. Users must be 16 years old.

Low-speed electric scooters that top out at 20 mph would also be allowed on paths, bike lanes, and roads by users who are at least 16 years old, down from 18 years old in current law.

Battery-powered devices designed for young children would be unregulated aside from a stipulation they must stay on sidewalks and paths.

Users who violate the regulations could pay fines and have their devices confiscated and impounded by the police. They are also subject to other existing traffic laws and penalties as well.

Safety concerns

Supporters of the legislation say the devices create a safety hazard for both riders and pedestrians because some can travel more than 40 mph and can often be found sharing space on both sidewalks and busy streets.

Several crashes involving young riders on e-bikes have made headlines this summer. A Crystal Lake 15-year-old was left in serious condition in August and was found to be the at-fault driver when he drove in front of a car, according to police. A 14-year-old was killed in July when he crossed in front of an SUV while riding an electric dirt bike in front of Wauconda High School.

In Chicago, a 16-year-old on a Lime scooter was killed when he lost control and was hit by a semi-truck near the intersection of Western Avenue and Irving Park Road in early August. Two other teens were killed in accidents on e-scooters on the city's South Side earlier in the summer.

The Secretary of State's office plans to use a public awareness campaign to make people aware of the new law and will be updating driver education materials.

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

Grundy Bank announces new scholarship opportunity

Grundy Bank is proud to announce the Grundy Bank Community Impact Scholarship, a new opportunity designed to recognize graduating seniors in the Class of 2027 who demonstrate leadership, community involvement, and a commitment to making a positive difference in their schools and communities.

Two \$500 scholarships will be awarded for the 2027-2028 academic year—one to a graduating senior from Morris Community High School and one to a graduating senior from Wilmington High School.

"We are excited to offer this new scholarship opportunity to recognize students who are making a meaningful difference in their communities," said Ava Terry, Marketing Director of Grundy Bank.

"Giving back and investing in the communities we serve is incredibly important to us, and we believe it's equally important to recognize the

students who have been doing so throughout their high school careers."

Applications are now open and must be submitted by March 1, 2027. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Students interested in applying can find complete eligibility requirements, application details, and official rules and terms by visiting the Community Commitment page on Grundy Bank's website at www.grundy.bank/community-commitment/.

Grundy Bank is proud to invest in the next generation of local leaders and recognize students who are committed to making a meaningful impact in their communities.

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JJC launches new Fire Academy

The Joliet Junior College (JJC) department of public services has launched in fall 2026 a new fire academy that prepares students for the Illinois state certification exam upon completion.

"The new fire academy was created in response to the growing regional need for firefighters and paramedics," said Patricia Binfa, department chair of public services at JJC. "Fire departments and EMS agencies throughout our area are looking for qualified professionals, and our goal is to help address those workforce needs by equipping students with the knowledge, skills and training needed to enter the public safety profession."

JJC's fire academy is a 16-week program with curriculum that aligns with the Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM).

Students will earn a certificate of completion after successfully completing the academy. The certificate can be applied toward JJC's associate in applied science (AAS) in fire science degree.

"What is different about the new academy is that students will now have the opportunity to complete their OSFM-approved firefighter training and certification requirements directly through JJC in a structured cohort model. Previously, students typically obtained this training through external fire academies or departments. The academy creates a direct pathway for students to earn their BOF certification and then continue into the fire science AAS program if desired."

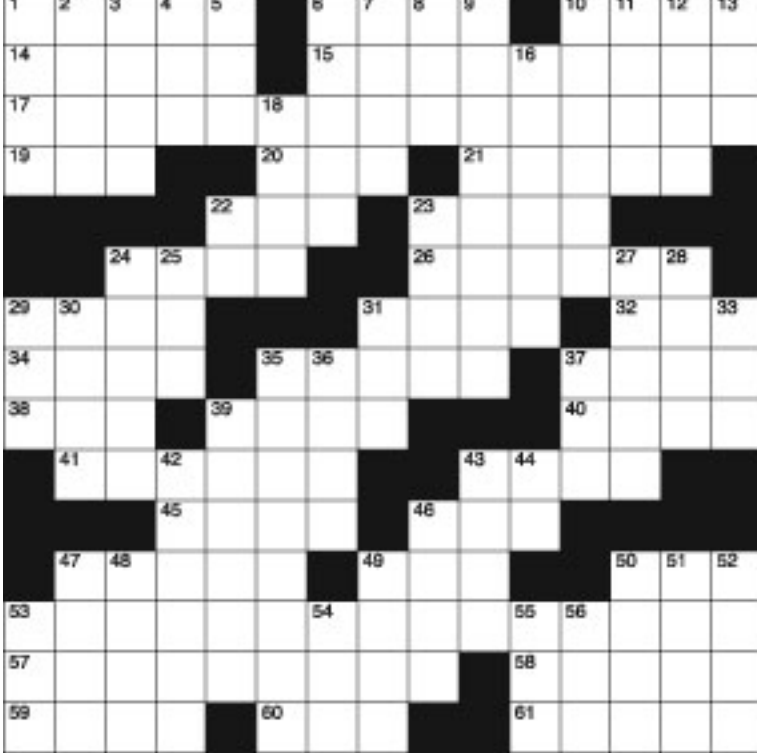
While JJC has a fire sciences program and an emergency medical

services (EMS) program, the fire academy remains separate from EMS.

With a cap of 20 students each semester, the fire academy allows for smaller class sizes, among other benefits.

"The JJC fire science team is excited about the opportunities the academy will provide for students," Binfa said. "The academy will give students more hands-on training and a direct pathway into the profession while helping them build the skills and experience needed to be successful in the field. We are also looking forward to strengthening our partnerships with local fire departments and serving as a resource for the communities we support."

Applications for the spring 2027 fire academy are open now through Sept. 30.



- CLUES ACROSS**
1. Manila hemp plant
 6. Turkish river
 10. Something to read
 14. In a way, initiated
 15. Popular Apple TV series
 17. King Charles is part of it
 19. Earlier
 20. Foot (Latin)
 21. Zodiac sign
 22. A browning of the skin
 23. Remain as is
 24. Turfs
 26. It's used to slaughter animals
 29. Volcanic crater

31. The mother of Jesus
32. One's life story
34. One-time Liverpool coach Slot
35. Counterparts
37. Jacob ____, American journalist
38. Digital audiotape
39. River in South Africa
40. Kimono sashes
41. Rooting somewhere
43. American spy Aldrich
45. A way to call for
46. Taxi
47. Pancakes made of buckwheat flour
49. Swiss river
50. Popular type of video game (abbr.)

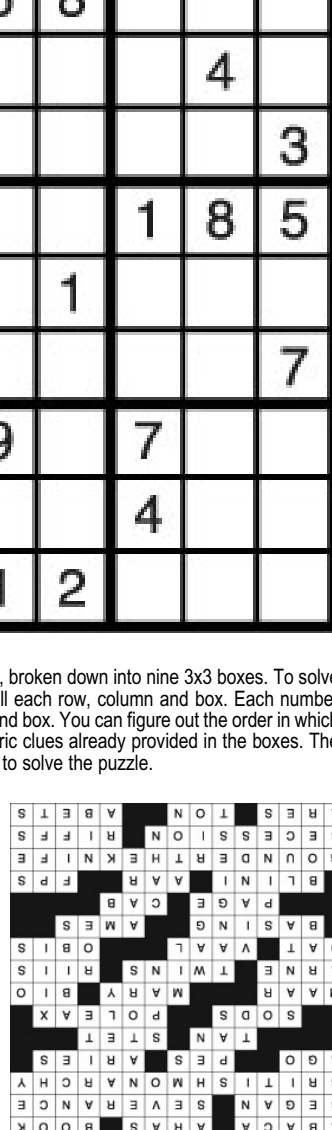
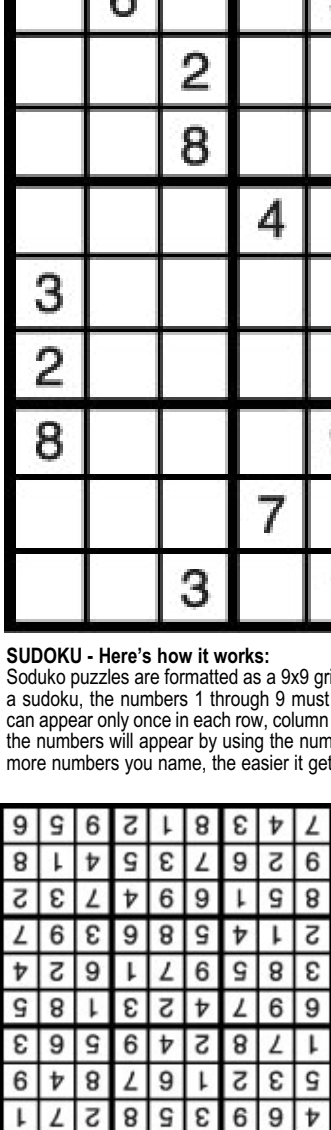
53. Have surgery
57. Formal withdrawal from a union
58. Performs spoken improv
59. Greek war god
60. 2,000 lbs.
61. Helps to evade capture

- CLUES DOWN**
1. Swedish rock group
 2. "Friday Night Lights" director Peter
 3. Currency exchange fee
 4. Feline
 5. Folk singer DiFranco
 6. Ghastly pale from distress
 7. Rapid eye movements
 8. Monetary unit of Macao
 9. Lawmakers
 10. Colorless mineral
 11. At some prior time
 12. American protest singer
 13. Opener
 16. Seldom
 18. Relaxing places
 22. Touchdown
 23. From end to end
 24. Kids love him
 25. Metal-bearing solid
 27. Skin care product manufacturer
 28. Thirteen
 29. Angry
 30. Member of a Semitic people
 31. One-thousandth of an inch
 33. Former CIA
 35. Most lemony
 36. Engage in
 37. Mass of fish eggs
 39. Food supplies
 42. Backbones
 43. American real estate investment firm
 44. Megabyte
 46. "Three Coins in the Fountain" songwriter
 47. Dutch colonist
 48. Full-grown pike fish
 49. Emergency prep expert Edwards
 50. Flute
 51. Dismissive sound
 52. Slang term for marijuana
 53. Young women's association
 54. Cosmopolitan city
 55. Narrow isthmus in Thailand
 56. Pointed end of a pen



SUDOKU - Here's how it works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle.



COALER SPORTS



Photo by Amy Walker

COALER LOGAN NATYSHOK runs the ball during Friday's game against Morris.

Missed opportunities, big plays doom the Coalers

BY JIM SHELDON
SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

The game of football often comes down to who can execute the X's and O's best.

In the home opener Friday in Coal City, the Morris Warriors' execution was top notch as they rattled off 28 unanswered points and cruised to a 28-7 win.

"Great effort, but like you said, just some of those big plays we had opportunities to get off the field and they were able to convert on some long pass plays and some long runs," said head coach Francis Loughran.

The Coaler (1-1) defense forced a three-and-out to start and moved the ball well before turning it over on downs, one of three times on the night.

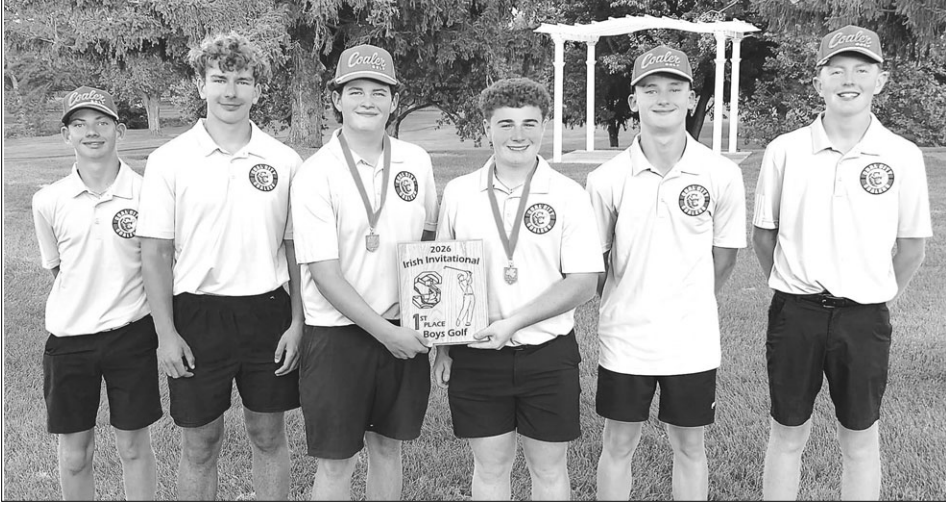
Morris (2-0) was plagued by penalties on their next drive and most of the night (8-78 yards). Coal City quarterback

Coal City quarterback Connor Henline found a wide-open Logan Natushok, who outraced

Natysnok who outraced the defense for an 88-yard touchdown reception early in the second quarter.

Morris responded just two minutes later on a 20-yard touchdown pass from Marion Persich to RJ Kennedy.

A huge 58-yard punt return set up the Warriors' next score, a 15-yard touchdown run.



COAL CITY GOLFERS who captured the Seneca Invite trophy include Reed Sulzberger, McKale Perino, Jaxon Duke, Frankie Ponio, Kory Lovell and Trevor Walker.

Off to strong start on the links

Coal City wins Seneca Invite

The Coal City boys golf team continued its strong start to the season with a tournament championship and another solid showing against Seneca and Morris.

The Coalers captured first place at the Seneca Invite held Monday at Morris Country Club, combining for a team score of 341.

Jaxon Duke led Coal City with a 79, good enough for second place individually. Teammate

ed a 90 to complete Coal City's four scoring rounds. Reed Sulzberger and McKale Perino also competed for the Coalers.

Coal City followed its tournament victory with another competitive performance in a three-team match against Morris and Seneca.

Only five strokes separated all three teams as Morris finished first with a 168. Coal City was right behind with a 171, edging Seneca by two strokes after the Irish finished at 173.

The result improved the Coalers to 3-1 on the season.

Krause each shot a 43 to complete the team score.

Ponio was only one stroke back with a 44, while Sulzberger finished with a 48.

Through the two outings, Duke has established himself as Coal City's early leader, highlighted by his runner-up finish at the Seneca Invite. But the Coalers have also displayed plenty of depth, with Ponio earning a third-place tournament finish and Lovell, Walker and Krause contributing solid rounds.

With a tournament
championship already

we obviously need to clean up."

The 6'4", 220 lb. signal caller didn't make many mistakes as evidenced by his 12-for-16 statline for 165 yards but after a Coaler punt, his pass was underthrown and Aiden Scrogam jumped all over it for the interception.

An almost eight and a half minute drive came up short as multiple carries were stuffed by the Warrior front in the redzone.

Persich then put the game away with a 59-yard touchdown run, part of a 128-yard night on the ground. If the Coalers were able to punch it in, it would have been a one-score game, but the execution wasn't there on Friday.

"That was a part of our plan was to try and keep him in the pocket as much as possible. He's a big athletic player, and he was able to find a little bit of space at times and and he

took advantage of it."

"I thought all night guys up front like Emmett Easton, Keaton Berta and AJ McGarvey did a great job of playing the line of scrimmage and trying to keep him in the pocket as much as we could."

Henline finished 8-for-18 for 210 yards. Natyshok had a big night receiving with two receptions for 135 yards but was held in check on the ground with 32 carries for just 69 yards.

"They had Natyshok as a focal point, deservedly so. We were just unable to get the ground game going like we have in the past and they were able to have guys in spots and it was just kind of tough to get in a rhythm."

Kole Carpenter had two catches for 48 yards and a two-yard carry, Meents added 16 yards on two receptions and Scroggum tallied two grabs



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COALER SPORTS

Coal City sweeps singles before heading to L-P

Coal City's girls tennis team didn't take long to rebound from a season-opening loss.

After falling to Morris on Monday, the Lady Coalers came right back with convincing victories on consecutive days, defeating Joliet West 6-1 Tuesday before taking down Bradley-Bourbonnais 5-2 at home Wednesday.

The back-to-back victories gave Coal City some momentum heading into the LaSalle-Peru tournament over the weekend.

Against Bradley, the Coalers were perfect in singles competition as Melody Leman, Kayla Stalter and Charly Gray

each picked up victories.

Leman appeared to hit her stride in her third match of the young season at No. 1 singles. She controlled play from the baseline, using deep shots and spin to defeat Lauren Fischer 8-2.

Stalter had to work considerably harder at No. 2. Trailing Jordynn Ryan 6-5, Stalter took control when it mattered most, winning three straight games to pull out an 8-6 victory.

Gray completed the singles sweep at No. 3, defeating Aaliyah Lanum 8-6. Her serving continued to improve as she earned her second straight victory following a three-set heart-

breaker in her varsity debut Monday.

Coal City also took the top two doubles matches against Bradley.

Kyla Stark and Lanie Winke jumped out to a five-game advantage at No. 1. Stark and Winke held their composure down the stretch to close out an 8-6 victory.

Vanna Liebermann and Aubrey Jensen had a much easier time at No. 2, rolling to an 8-2 victory.

Bradley picked up its two victories at Nos. 3 and 4 doubles.

Adyson Planeta and Brooklyn Adams fell 8-5 at No. 3, while Addison Smith and Lauren Jacovec also lost 8-5 at No. 4.

"The girls are playing a little better every day and I'm excited to see how far they will get this season if they can maintain a high level of focus and keep building confidence in their shots," Coal City coach Matt Leman said.

Coalers dominate Joliet West

The improvement was already apparent Tuesday when Coal City defeated Joliet West 6-1.

Again, the Coalers swept all three singles matches.

Leman earned a hard-fought victory over Willow Perruquet at No. 1. After taking the opening set 6-2, Leman fought through a tight second set before eventually prevailing in a 10-7 supertiebreaker.

Stalter defeated Mia Kristensen 6-4, 6-1 at No. 2.

Gray picked up her first varsity victory at No. 3, starting fast with a 6-0 opening set against Helen Diaz before finishing off the match 6-4.

In doubles, Winke and Stark earned a 6-4, 6-4 victory at No. 1, while Liebermann and Jensen prevailed in a match that went to a 10-7 supertiebreaker.

Planeta and Adams also came through at No. 3. The Coal City duo rallied in the first set and won a tiebreaker before carrying the momentum into the second for a 7-6, 6-3 victory.

Joliet West's lone win came at No. 4 doubles against Jacovec and Smith. Coal City's season

began Monday with a 6-1 loss to a strong Morris squad, although there were encouraging performances in defeat.

"Morris played a great match and I always appreciate the high level of good

sportsmanship and friendly competition," Leman said. "It is always a great experience competing against a quality program, and we have some work to do, but my ladies are up for the challenge this year."



Photo by Amy Walker

SWINGING A BACKHANDED save during #1 doubles action is Coal City's Delanie Winke.



Photo by Amy Walker

SERVING FOR THE Coal City tennis team at #1 doubles is Kyla Stark.

Lady Coalers turn in strong opening week

Coal City's varsity volleyball team opened the season with a pair of victories before testing itself against some strong competition Saturday at the Ottawa Invite.

The Lady Coalers defeated Prairie Central and Morris to start the season 2-0, then went 2-2 during Saturday's tournament, picking up victories over IMSA and Yorkville Christian before falling to Ottawa and Byron.

Coal City began tournament play in impressive fashion, sweeping IMSA 25-14, 25-17. The Lady Coalers followed with another straight-set victory, beating Yorkville Christian 25-15, 25-18.

That set up a pool-play match against host Ottawa. Coal City stayed within striking distance in both sets but fell 25-20, 25-21.

The Lady Coalers then faced Byron in the third-place match, falling 25-17 in the opener before battling to a much closer 25-22 decision in the second set.

Several Coalers turned

in strong performances over the four tournament matches.

Coal City had plenty of balance at the net as three players finished with 16 kills apiece. Averie Hodgen, Darcie Ladas and Leah Aldridge shared the team lead, while Margaret Carlson added 12 kills. Lilly Gerrish chipped in five.

The Lady Coalers were also dangerous from the service line. Aldridge led the team with 19 service points and five aces, while Ashlyn Siron recorded 18 points and four aces.

Carlson was particularly effective with seven aces among her 14 service points, while Ladas delivered six aces and 13 points. Hodgen finished the tourney with 11 points and four aces, and Rese Symons had four aces among her seven service points.

Coal City entered the Ottawa tournament unbeaten after taking care of Morris in straight sets, 25-18, 25-21.

Siron handed out 15 assists in the victory as the Coalers again showed balance offensively. Ladas,

Carlson and Aldridge each put down five kills, Hodgen finished with four and Gerrish added three.

Aldridge had a big match from the service line, accounting for 12 points and four aces. Hodgen added five service points and Waliczek had three.

The Lady Coalers opened their season with a hard-fought sweep of Prairie Central, winning 25-21, 25-22.

Siron started the season strong by recording 16 assists. She also contributed six service points with three aces.

Aldridge, Waliczek and Hodgen each added five service points, with Aldridge and Waliczek serving two aces apiece.

After six matches in their opening week, including four against tournament competition, the Lady Coalers will now turn their attention to the start of conference play, hosting Streator Thursday then compete in the Willowbrook Tourney.



Photo by Amy Walker

COAL CITY'S LUKE MUNSTERMAN kicks the ball during Thursday's season opener against Serena.



Photo by Amy Walker

COALER GOALIE Carter Nicholson kicks the ball into play after an attempted goal by Serena. Coal City won 9-1.

CC Soccer starts with a victory

Coal City boy's varsity soccer team opened the 2026 season in impressive fashion Thursday night, defeating Serena 9-1 to begin the season with a 1-0 record.

Dominick Chellino led the way offensively with a hat trick and two assists, while Owen Petersen contributed a goal and three assists. Carter Hollis and Nick Pfeiffer each added two goals, and Decklan Castle rounded out the scoring with a goal of his own.

Louie Artaega, Zander Nicola and Nick Pfeiffer each recorded an assist in the offensive outburst.

Coal City controlled the game from the opening whistle, putting together a strong offensive performance to start the season on a positive note.

The boys will look to build on the victory as they host Streator on Thursday.



Photo by Amy Walker

COAL CITY'S Brady Noffsinger dribbles the ball down the field during their season opener Thursday night.