



COAL CITY COURANT.com

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER • (815) 634-0315



THEY BECAME KNOWN as the Plane People. The nearly 7,000 commercial airline passengers and crew members who were stranded in the small community of Gander, Newfoundland on September 11, 2001. The stories of the passengers and the community members who greeted them with open arms is the basis of the Tony Award musical *Come From Away*. This weekend, the Coal City Theater Department will present the story over three days—Sept. 10 and 12 at 7 p.m. and Sept. 13 at 2 p.m. Taking the stage are [from left to right, front to back]: Ty Christopher, Penny D'Arcy, Bella Bartholomew, Maxx Kramer, Charlotte Banks, Maddox Meents, Theo Fritz, and Alex Collins.



ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 American Airlines Captain Beverly Bass was piloting a Boeing 777 from Paris to Dallas when American airspace closed and Bass's flight was ordered to land at Gander International Airport. Bass is a featured character in the musical *Come From Away* and Coal City High School junior Lexi Dearth will portray the history-making pilot.

A small town. A world of strangers. One remarkable story

Coal City Theatre Dept. to present *Come from Away*

As the 25th anniversary of September 11 approaches, we remember not only the tragedy and loss of that day, but also the extraordinary story of what unfolded thousands of miles away in Gander, Newfoundland.

When the United States closed its airspace 38 planes carrying nearly 7,000 passengers and crew were diverted to Cander, part of Operation Yellow Ribbon—Canada's emergency response to safely ground more than 220 aircraft from the sky.

As the world watched the towers fall and the Pentagon

burn, and as the bravery of those aboard United Flight 93 was only beginning to be understood, the people of Gander opened their community—and their hearts—to thousands of stranded passengers. Many of them were unaware of what was happening on the ground or why their planes had suddenly been diverted. They arrived frightened, confused, and far from home, not knowing that the small community of Gander was about to become a place of refuge, compassion, and extraordinary kindness.

For several days, the people of Gander cared for these strangers as their own. Friendships were formed, stories were shared, and acts of kindness created connections that have endured.

"GOOD CAN OUTFIGHT EVIL ANY TIME. HUMAN KINDNESS AND LOVE AND COM-PASSION ARE WHAT OUR WORLD IS LACKING TODAY. WE NEED MORE OF IT."

—CLAUDE ELLIOTT, MAYOR OF GANDER NEWFOUNDLAND

In the words of Mayor Claude, "On the first day we had 7,000 strangers. On the third day, we had 7,000 friends."

A story born from one of the darkest days in American history, but remembered for the extraordinary compassion of ordinary people who simply chose to help.

This is the true story behind *Come From Away*—a Tony Award winning musical coming to the Coal City Performing Arts Center stage this weekend.

Coal City Theatre Department's production will introduce audiences to Gander and the citizens who opened their schools, churches, and homes to stranded passengers from 95 countries. The remarkable acts that ensured everyone of the "Plane People," were fed, clothed and connected.

Written by David Hein and Irene Sankoff, *Come From Away*, tells the story of what started as an average day in a small town turned into what has been described as an international sleepover.

The diverse cast of charac-

ters represents real people whose lives became connected to Gander—some who called the community home, and others who found themselves there unexpectedly in September 2001. Each brings a unique story, perspective, and experience to a place that, for a few extraordinary days, became home.

There is Mayor Claude, Bonnie from the SPCA, Beulah who heads the Gander Legion, air traffic controller Doug, news reporter Janice, police officer Oz, school teacher Annette and Garth who heads the local bus drivers union. And on the planes we find Diane, Bob, Nick, Hannah, Kevin T. and Kevin J., and we are introduced to Beverly, who captains one of the 38 planes touching down in Gander. Unique charac-

SEE COAL CITY THEATRE PAGE 2

Prop money passes for the real thing

Victim urges shoppers, clerks to take a closer look

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

Tim Andrews said at his age he doesn't need to learn any more life lessons.

But after a recent quick trip to the store, he is sharing his story so that other people don't end up being short changed like he and his wife did.

It was a Sunday and the Wilmington couple needed a few things from the store, so they stopped at a local dollar store. Andrews' wife told him it was just a short list and she wouldn't be long if he wanted to sit in the car.

As he waited, Andrews noticed it was a busy place for a Sunday. It wasn't long before his wife came walking out with a couple of sacks in one hand and her receipt and change in the other.

SEE PROP MONEY PAGE 2



REAL OR PROP? At first glance, the \$10 bill at bottom looks much like the genuine bill above it. A closer look reveals the words "For Motion Picture Purposes," along with other differences.

The \$1 million winner

A Braidwood resident's birthday celebration became a million-dollar milestone after he won a \$1 million Lotto jackpot from a lottery ticket gifted to him by a friend at his birthday party.

The winning ticket was purchased at Gas N Wash, 1951 E. Laraway Rd. in New Lenox, and given to him as a birthday gift.

"My wife planned a party for my big day," said the winner, who opted to remain anonymous. "One of my friends handed me an envelope with some scratch-offs inside. I never would've imagined actually winning."

The ticket matched all six numbers -- 11-17-22-26-36-45 -- in the Saturday, August 8, Lotto Million 2 drawing, securing the \$1 million prize. The ticket also won an additional \$2

for matching two numbers on another line.

"I didn't even think I won anything at first glance," he said. "I had one of my friends check the ticket. He must've also overlooked it, because he said I only won a grand."

The winner added, "I thought, 'Wow, a thousand bucks isn't bad, this was a great day.' But I was not prepared for what came next."

When the winner and his wife visited their local Illinois Lottery prize center, they received a life-changing surprise.

"We told the staff that I won a thousand dollars," he said. "One of the workers smiled and said 'Sir, you actually won a million dollars.' I was in complete shock. My wife even started tearing up."

After a few phone

calls, the news quickly spread throughout the family.

"Both my son-in-law and eldest daughter said, 'Get out of here, are you sure?'" he recalled with a laugh. "I told them, 'As sure as I am a year older.'"

Now, the winner and his wife are looking forward to celebrating their good fortune with their family. They plan to take their annual winter trip to Florida to visit relatives, and he hopes to purchase a new car and golf cart.

"We'll be going on a cruise to celebrate our 40th anniversary and my kids' birthdays," he said with a smile. "I told them

SEE WINNER PAGE 2



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Editor's note: This page was produced for the Sept. 2 edition but due to an error with the press configuration, a wrong page was published in its place. Since our team worked hard taking photos and writing the content, it is being published this week.

COALER SPORTS



Photo by Amy Walker

COAL CITY LINEMEN Gabe Hamilton (77), Emmett Easton (62) and Brody D'Orazio (73) block out the Morris defense while running the Coaler offense during Friday's game.



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 Connor Henline found a wide-open Logan Natyshok 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.



Photo by Amy Walker

COALERS BRODY D'ORAZIO (left) and Keaton Berta tackle Morris runningback Romero Zdanwic during Friday's game.

"We got caught sometimes giving them a short field and they were able to take advantage of that."

The Coalers turned it over on downs just before half and got the ball first in the third. They were moving the ball well when a trick play was blown up by Morris. Maddox Meents attempted a pass and the pressure forced an interception.

"That was a designed

play call and a situation where we thought we might be able to catch them. It just didn't work out," said Loughran.

Persich went to work and on fourth down, he got the edge and went 40 yards for a two-score advantage (21-7).

"The fourth and short, the quarterback was able to end up getting to the outside and scoring on that. Those types of things

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 Scrogam tallied two grabs

for 11 yards and recorded 10 yards on three carries.

Defensively, Cooper Morris led the way with seven tackles and Brody D'Orazio recorded six. Tyler Phillips and Carpenter both made five stops and Tyce Farrell, Berta, Theo Fritz and Easton all tallied four. Ethan Donnelly and Natyshok both had three tackles and Meents and Scrogam both added two and also in on a stop were Bobby Rodriguez, McGarvey and Maxx Kramer.

"The crowd was great, kind of felt like a playoff game. Obviously coming in, there's a lot of hype around the game. It's always good to have that type of crowd here at home."

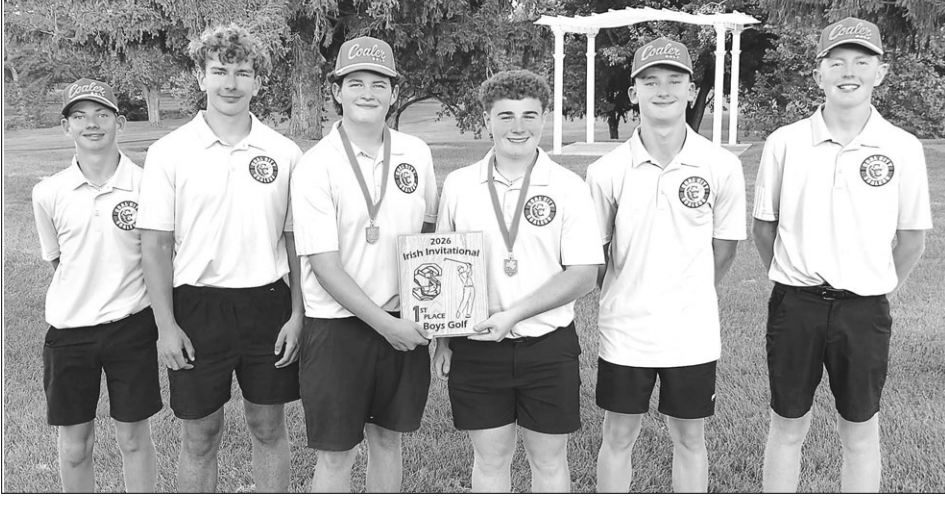
The Coalers travel to Lisle (2-0) for the start of Illinois Central Eight conference play Friday. The Lions are coming off a 42-8 win over St. Edward and have scored 91 points over their first two games.

Quarterback Nathan Garcia rushed for 136 yards and three touchdowns and running backs JT Tumbarelli and Jacob Aalrust combined for another 200 yards on the ground so stopping the run will be first and foremost.

"They're running that Power-T offense now with a lot of misdirection, so it's going to be important for us to play assignment football. They spread the ball around. They've got some big linemen, so we need to make sure we read our keys correctly."

Lisle had to cancel their varsity season last year due to low numbers but their junior varsity squad went 7-2 composed mostly of sophomores.

The Coalers will be looking to get their running game back on track which opens up the passing game for Henline and company.



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 Frankie Ponio wasn't far behind, shooting an 83 to finish third.

Kory Lovell added an 89 and Trevor Walker card-

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.

Duke again led Coal City, this time firing a 42. The consistency behind him proved important as Lovell, Walker and Braxton

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 secured and a 3-1 record in head-to-head competition, the Coalers have put together a promising start to the season.

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Do as we please

BRAIDWOOD— In response to "Nix With the Fireworks." No one from Braidwood wants to be like Naperville besides the transplants that keep moving here from the suburbs. If you want Naperville, move to Naperville. We have a great community here that is rather lax and allows their residence to do as they please.

Golf cart crackdown

BRAIDWOOD— Hopefully the Braidwood Police will start enforcing golf cart laws in this town now that the Braidwood Recreation Club is encouraging their members to break the law with their new golf cart entrance. Nothing like saying that 800 residents who are members will be able to ride their golf carts from their homes into the club using this new entrance. Um, try more like 10 because those who live on the other side of the railroad tracks can not drive the golf carts over the railroad tracks to get to the other side. Apparently the Braidwood Recreation Club feels that the laws don't apply to them or their members. That's why we stopped our membership several years ago. Hopefully the police start writing a bunch of tickets for illegally operating a golf cart on an unauthorized roadway or sidewalk.

Denied justice

WILMINGTON— One more time, a major reason of increased inflation in 2022 was government money given out to Americans frivolously by both Trump and Biden. That furious spending caused supplies of goods to suddenly drop thus prices for existing goods went up accordingly with supply and demand. That's Capitalism, a good thing right? Supplies across the world were depleted and supply chains also were disrupted causing even more price gouging (again Capitalism is good right?) As far as that (Epstein thing) again open investigations by law cannot even be discussed. Of course there are prominent Democrats in those files, investigate immediately, who cares? Investigate all involved in those files. Every party affiliation, every political donor, every friend, acquaintance, Grandfather or Grandmother. Those hundreds of living victims are being denied justice given by law that Trump signed personally last year. That Constitution thing also demands that justice is carried out. But ask yourself why won't he release those unredacted files? You know why, it's the very first reason you just thought of. Children were raped, sodomized and murdered according to already released snippets of these files. This blatant cover-up will never go away, nor should it according to the hard-core Patriots who fervently wave flags for the American way. Right?

Joe Heller



EDITOR'S NOTE: Joe Heller's original 9/11 cartoon titled "Liberty Laments" is being reprinted from 25 years ago. This cartoon was drawn and published on Sept. 11, 2001, and reflects the sorrow still felt even to this day. Readers responded requesting copies of this cartoon. Heller's newspaper printed 10,000 copies and raised over \$100,000 for the Sept. 11 victims fund through the Red Cross.

Stop the heckling

BRAIDWOOD—Those associated with the previous city administration just need to stop heckling our current city officials. We keep seeing time and time again that the former city administrator and former finance commissioner throwing jabs at the current council members just to be a thorn in their side. Watching city council meetings online and seeing the comments from the same three or four hecklers just makes you shake your head. The only two civilized members of the previous administration are the former Mayor and former public safety commissioner.

The narcissist

WILMINGTON—How do you like your gas prices, your food prices? So it's not a war in Iran, so what is it? Now we have Lake America, coins with Trump face (be sure to order yours). Trump needs the money, (ha, ha) he's destroyed the White House, what's next, maybe Mount

Rushmore, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon; no end to this narcissist! Hope you Trumpers are happy; Canada and the rest of the world hates us.

Against data centers

COAL CITY—I'm calling about the data center. The average between 72 and 75 percent of all Americans do not want a data center in their vicinity. Why is it that our mayor and our trustees of which I just read in the paper all want a raise. So why do we want to be stuck with this? Nobody else wants it. If 72 and 75 percent of all Americans in the whole United States don't want it, why should we get it? Nobody else wants it. And our house values are going to be depreciated.

I know why

SHADOW LAKES— This generation of young children are not as smart as the last generation. Which up to now previous generations were always more intelligent and smarter with more common sense

then previous generations, until now. I think I know why, if you would like to know my answer, send it in the Sound Off column and I will tell you. Dan Hill

Ignored the park

WILMINGTON—So the governor comes to town to visit the Gemini Giant (clever headline by the way). What I want to know is did Pritzker take the time to drive through the park and see all the damage from the tornado? He was right there and the park road was blocked off. I bet he didn't because he is too busy campaigning with all his wealth. The man is not in touch with Illinois communities and its people.

Run by liberals

DIAMOND—Watching an ad on channel 9 about Darren Bailey being too extreme for Illinois people. Well he is too extreme because the state is run by liberal Democrats. I believe in Darren Bailey.

Diesel price hits record high

The national average price of diesel has reached a new all-time record high of \$5.85 per gallon, continuing to climb and surpassing the previous record of \$5.82 per gallon set in June 2022, according to GasBuddy, North America's fuel savings platform.

While gasoline prices often dominate headlines, diesel can have a much broader impact on inflation and business costs. Diesel powers much of the U.S. economy, including freight trucks, trains, agricultural equipment, and construction machinery.

As diesel prices rise, transportation costs increase, often leading to higher prices for consumer goods and services.

According to GasBuddy data, more than 515,000 unique users reported fuel prices in August 2026 alone, contributing to one of North America's most comprehensive real-time fuel price datasets and reflecting the scale of GasBuddy's highly engaged consumer driver community.

"Diesel is the fuel that moves the economy, and when diesel prices reach record levels, the impact extends far beyond the transportation sector," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. "Higher diesel prices impact consumers as rising supply chain costs increase the price of groceries, household goods, deliveries, and countless other products Americans rely on every day."

Diesel prices have climbed sharply in recent months as geopolitical tensions and supply chain disruptions continue to drive volatility in global energy markets. Higher oil prices, reduced refining capacity abroad, and tight global inventories have all contributed to rising diesel and gasoline prices. As a result, diesel prices are up over \$2/gal from a year ago (September 2025: \$3.70/gal diesel).

The average price of unleaded gas over the Labor Day weekend was \$4.29 per gallon. In Wilmington, gas prices ranged from \$3.94/g at Circle K to \$4.04/g at Shell.

In Braidwood, gas was \$4.19/g at Casey's up to \$4.24/g at Marathon. In Coal City, gas will cost you \$4.49/g across the board.

Morris is charging anywhere from \$3.99/g at Citgo to \$4.07/g at Shell.

Bourbonnais Gulf is charging \$3.96/g while Gas N Wash is at \$4.15/g.

Full shutdown of I-55 planned over two nights

A full closure will be required in both directions of I-55 at I-80 over two consecutive nights beginning, Wednesday, Sept. 9. The closures are necessary to safely install new steel beams on the I-80 bridge over the expressway.

Wednesday, Sept. 9

Starting at 8 p.m., westbound I-80 will be reduced to one lane between Houbolt Road and I-55.

At 9 p.m., northbound and southbound I-55 will be reduced to one lane between Illinois 59 and U.S. 6.

At 11 p.m., the eastbound I-80 ramp to northbound I-55 will close.

Between midnight and 5 a.m., northbound I-55 will be fully closed at I-80.

A detour will direct northbound I-55 traffic to exit at eastbound I-80 to northbound Houbolt Road and reenter westbound I-80 to access northbound I-55.

One lane on northbound and southbound I-55 will reopen by 5 a.m., with all lanes and ramps open by 6 a.m. Thursday.

Thursday, Sept. 10

Starting at 8 p.m., westbound I-80 will be reduced to one lane between Houbolt Road and I-55.

At 9 p.m., northbound and southbound I-55 will be reduced

to one lane between Illinois 59 and U.S. 6.

Between midnight and 5 a.m., southbound I-55 will be fully closed at I-80.

During that time, a detour will direct southbound I-55 traffic to exit at westbound I-80 to southbound Ridge Road and reenter eastbound I-80 to access southbound I-55.

All lanes and ramps will reopen by 6 a.m. Friday.

As the I-80 reconstruction continues, the public should continue to expect lane shifts, overnight lane closures and significant delays and allow extra time for trips through this area.

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Interior/Exterior



Photo by Flotsam River Circus

FLOTSAM RIVER CIRCUS will perform on Monday, Sept. 14, at McKinley Woods – Kerry Sheridan Grove in Channahon. The free performance is for all ages.

Flotsam River Circus drops anchor at Forest Preserve District's McKinley Woods for free performance

The Flotsam River Circus will bring its aerial acrobatics, circus acts, songs and silliness to McKinley Woods Kerry Sheridan Grove on Monday, Sept. 14.

The outdoor entertainment troupe will perform on the shore of the Des Plaines River behind Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

The free, all-ages event will take place from 5-7 p.m. in partnership with the Channahon Park District.

The theme of the per-

formance is what happens when the world goes awry and mutant fish take over. Flotsam River Circus is a 501 nonprofit organization with the goal of spreading whimsy, wonder and a spirit of possibility.

When Flotsam River Circus contacted the Forest Preserve District about performing on the river at the preserve, it was a unique opportunity that was hard to pass up, said Jerome Gabriel, facility supervisor at Four Rivers.

"The Flotsam River Circus is a non-profit organization that seeks to

bring awareness to the nation's local waterways through art and performance," he said. "Being a preserve that is completely surrounded by water and on a working river, we felt it was important for people to come out to celebrate our local waterways and all they offer."

DBLdaws Food Truck will be serving food from 5-8 p.m. Plan to bring camp chairs or blankets to sit on during the performance, which begins at 6 p.m.

"I hope that families find a relaxing and fun evening along the riverbanks while gaining an appreciation of what the water brings to our local community," Gabriel said.

Flotsam River Circus is a troupe of musicians, circus performers and puppeteers who travel on a ramshackle raft giving free performances in waterfront towns. Since 2019, the troupe has covered nearly 3,000 miles of river, performing in 15 different states.

"Our tours have taken us down many rivers, including the Sacramento, the Ohio, and the Mississippi," the Flotsam website states. "In 2025, we traveled from Buffalo to New York City to help celebrate the bicentennial of the Erie Canal. This year, we are traveling up the Illinois Waterway from St. Louis to Chicago. In future years, we hope to bring our floating circus to the rivers and canals of Europe – and eventually all over the world."

Chapter to meet

Chapter GK PEO will have their monthly meeting on Monday, Sept. 14, at the home of Vicky Weidling. Program for the evening will be on Wilmington history.

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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.

Garden Club annual membership tea, birthday

The Wilmington Garden Club will have its annual Membership Tea and celebrate its 90th birthday on Wednesday, Sept. 16.

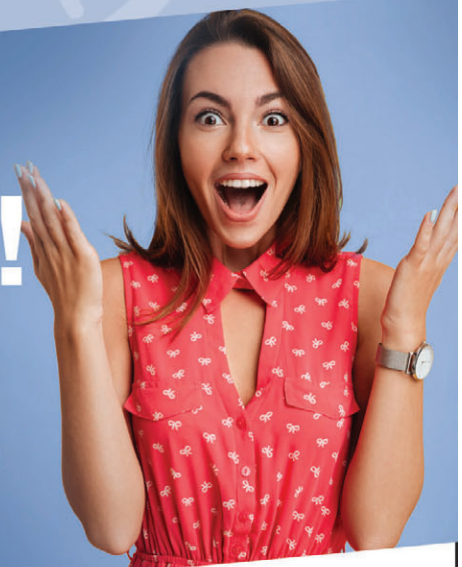
The club's meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m. at the Wilmington Park District 315 N. Water St. If you have an interest in gardening become a member and bring a friend.

For more information call Judy at 815-258-8450.

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OBITUARIES

Nick Cook

COAL CITY—Nick Cook, 21, of Coal City, passed away unexpectedly on Monday, Aug. 31, 2026.

Born April 21, 2005, in Joliet, Nicholas Wesley was the son of Andrew and Julie (Drager) Cook. He was raised in Coal City, attended Immaculate Conception School in Morris, and graduated from Coal City High School with the class of 2023. At the time of his passing, Nick was employed as an Operator with ExxonMobil.

Active and athletic throughout his life, Nick enjoyed a variety of sports and was always willing to try something new. He played basketball at both Immaculate Conception School and Coal City High School, participated in cross country during his grammar school years, was a member of the swim team, and especially enjoyed snowboarding.

Away from sports, Nick found happiness in many of life's simple pleasures. He enjoyed video gaming with his buddies, had an impressive enthusiasm for collecting Mountain Dew memorabilia, and loved being on or around the water, particularly spending time in the lake. Animals also held a special place in Nick's heart. From raising chickens and feeding ducks as a boy to the companionship he shared with his beloved dog, Zofie, his gentle nature was evident in the way he cared for them.

Those who knew Nick will remember him most for the kind and thoughtful person he was. He had a quiet determination and rarely allowed an obstacle to keep him from moving forward. Though he never sought the spotlight, Nick possessed an easy way with people and could strike up a conversation with just about anyone. He was genuine, approachable, and a friend to all, with a sincere belief that people should simply love and care for one another.

Nick could be careful and frugal when it came to himself, yet remarkably generous when it came to others. Beneath his quiet and sometimes complex nature was a young man who valued uncomplicated

things: time with the people he loved, his friends, his animals, the lake, and simply enjoying life as it came.

Above all, Nick cherished his parents and his family. They were at the center of his world, and the love he shared with them was immeasurable. In only 21 years, Nick touched countless lives through kindness rather than attention, friendship rather than recognition, and a gentle spirit that made people feel comfortable simply being themselves.

His life was far too brief, but the goodness with which Nick lived it, and his simple hope that everyone would love one another, will remain a lasting part of all who knew and loved him.

Survivors include his parents, Andrew and Julie; sister, Emma Cook; maternal grandparents: Gam'me – Henrietta Drager, Jerry and Jan Parker and Kathy Kennealy; paternal grandfather, Jerry (Cathy) Cook, and numerous aunts, uncles and cousins, as well as a host of friends.

Nick was preceded in death by his Papa Ray – Raymond Drager and paternal grandparents: Sue (Randy) Majdich.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Reeves Funeral Home, 75 N. Broadway (one block north of Illinois Route 113) in Coal City on Friday, Sept. 4, 2026 between the hours of 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. A private family funeral services will follow and cremation rites will be accorded.

Preferred memorial may be made as gifts in Nick's memory to Shriner's Childrens Hospital Chicago, 2211 N Oak Park Ave, Chicago, IL 60707.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.ReevesFuneral.com to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Nick's memorial page online through social media.

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



Lucille DeGulie

COAL CITY—Lucille DeGulie, 102, of Coal City. The Lord claimed His servant, Lucille Plese DeGulie on Wednesday morning, Sept. 2, 2026.

Lucille was born the second child of John and Margaret (Berta) Plese on April 15, 1924. She always felt blest to have been born on the farm located on the beautiful Kankakee River and all the pleasures, events, and friendships that blest her early years there.

Lucille attended Johnson School, a one-room country grade school, enjoyed her years at Reed Custer High School, and received B.A. and Masters Degrees from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana.

Lucille was proud of and deeply grateful to her parents for their strong mantle of parental guidance which created a respectful family love, a sound work ethic and a deep Catholic faith. She loved, appreciated and relished her six siblings; they were gifts.

Lucille's life was enriched by her teaching profession. She enjoyed the interaction with many young people and treasured all the friendships gained from that profession.

Lucille is survived by her beloved sisters Madonna Orr and Margaret Paoletti, and many loving nieces, nephews and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her beloved husband, Joseph DeGulie in 2019, and by her loving siblings and their spouses: Jim and Donita Plese, Marilyn and James Tyler, Leo and Ceil Plese, Dean and Judy Plese; brothers-in-law: Jack Orr and Albert Paoletti; sister-in-

law and brother-in-law, Freda and Ghlee Blair. She was also preceded by her beloved nieces: Clare Gaaney, Suzy Rhodes, Debbie Plese, and Jacqui Rilea; nephews: Tony Plese, Dean Plese Jr. and Greg Dennis and great-nephew and great-nieces: Joey Tyler, Margaret Rice and Lena Mogler.

There will be no visitation, but family and friends are invited to a Mass of Christian Burial on Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church, 604 S. Kankakee Street in Wilmington. Rev. Thomas Logue will preside and her nephews, Deacon Jay Plese and Deacon Michael Plese will assist.

For those who wish to participate, the Holy Rosary will be recited one half hour before Mass.

Lucille was an active member of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Coal City where she cherished her membership, but per her wishes, Mass will be celebrated at St. Rose of Lima Church in Wilmington where she wanted to receive her final Mass of Christian Burial, having celebrated all her previous Sacraments at St. Rose.

Per Lucille's request, please no memorials. Just light a candle and say a prayer for Lucille's soul.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.ReevesFuneral.com to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Lucille's memorial page online through social media.

Funeral services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory.



Patrick McNulty



WILMINGTON—Patrick Joseph McNulty, 80, of Wilmington, passed away on Aug. 11, 2026, at Saint Joseph Medical Center in Joliet.

Patrick was born in Chicago, on Oct. 31, 1945, to his parents, Joseph and Veronica McNulty. He was a dedicated union pipefitter who spent many years working diligently and making lifelong friends along the way. Patrick also spent time in Vietnam, serving in the Army.

Amongst his other passions was his love of helping people. He has literally given the shirt off his back, and worked on countless home projects. A more loyal friend you will never find. Those who knew him will remember his generous spirit and comical presence.

One of the last things Patrick said was, "I love everybody." Although he usually



delivered that message as a prank, that sentiment was well known to all who knew and loved him. It was simply who Patrick was. He cared about people and usually found a way to make them laugh. He will be sorely missed by his family, friends, neighbors, and all those fortunate enough to have known him.

He is survived by his two children: Erin and Megan; his four grandchildren: Bodhi, Sam, Maeko, and Lily; his two sisters, Leigh and Maripat.

A celebration of life service will be held at the Moose Lodge in Wilmington, IL at 32050 W. River Road on Nov. 1, 2026 at 2pm.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to Ronald McDonald House Charities.

Carol Morin

COAL CITY—Carol Morin, 85, of Coal City, passed away peacefully on Sunday, Sept. 6, 2026 at her home.

Born Dec. 6, 1940 in Joliet, Carol Ann was a daughter of Ervin and Jenny (Small) Phillips. She was raised and educated in Wilmington, and graduated from Wilmington High School with the class of 1958. Carol raised her two children in Coal City and was proud to see her family flourish by growing to include her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was happiest when she was able to spend time in her yard, tending to her garden, watching her flowers grow and being with her canine companion, Sailor. Carol will be missed deeply by those she loved and those who loved her.

Survivors include her son, Lenny (Carrie) Onsen, of Coal City; three grandchildren: Tiger (Jen) Onsen and Cody Onsen, both of Coal City, and Tony (Rose) Francisco, of Roselle, IL; two great-grandchildren: Griffin Onsen and New Baby Boy Onsen expected any day; one sister, Mary

(the late John) Manietta, of Coal City and many nieces and nephews.

Carol was preceded in death by her parents; the father of her children, Leonard "Swede" Onsen; her daughter, Tammy Francisco, and two sisters: Marilyn (Gerald) Krell and Joan Schumacher.

Private family services will be held at Braceville Gardner Cemetery where Carol will be laid to rest with Swede.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Carol's memory to Lightways Hospice and Serious Illness Care, 250 Water Stone Circle, Joliet, IL 60431.

Family and friends are encouraged to log onto www.ReevesFuneral.com to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Carol's memorial page online through social media.

Services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory.



Betty Roberts

COAL CITY—Betty Davidson Roberts, age 90, of Coal City, most recently a resident of The Gardens at Park Pointe in Morris, passed away on Sept. 1, 2026 at Morris Hospital.

Betty was born March 6, 1936, in Harriman, TN, to Charles and Alice (Ladd) Davidson. Though she made Illinois her home, she never lost the Southern roots that were an important part of who she was.

Betty was a devoted member of the Braceville United Methodist Church and spent many years volunteering at Morris Hospital. Having once been a caregiver herself, she understood the importance of helping others and giving of her time.

Strong-willed and fiercely independent, Betty was determined to do things her own way and remain independent for as long as possible. Her family often joked that her stubborn streak was probably a big reason she made it to 90. She was never afraid to speak her mind and always had an opinion to share.

Betty was also a wonderful Southern cook. She loved her recipes and cookbooks and took great pride in passing along her cooking knowledge and traditions to her family. Her kitchen was one of the many places where she showed her love.

Above all, Betty loved her family. She

is survived by her daughter, Katherine Rose, and daughter-in-law, Pam Roberts; her grandchildren: Adam and Kristi Roberts of Coal City; Michelle Reddinger and Derrick "D" Wren of Morris; Alan and Jessica Gabehart, Matt Gabehart and Katie Gabehart; her great-grandchildren: Zachary Reddinger, Samuel Reddinger, Caleb Reddinger, Haidyn Wren, Cooper Roberts, Zoe Roberts, and Keirsten, Kamden and Darcie Gabehart.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Charles and Alice Davidson; her husband, Joe Roberts; her son, Quintin Keith Roberts; and several brothers and sisters.

Memorial contributions in Betty's name may be made to the Braceville United Methodist Church.

Betty leaves behind a legacy of faith, strength, independence, family traditions, and love. Her family will miss her humor, her strong opinions, her cooking advice, and the unmistakable way she was simply Betty.

Services will be announced at a later date.

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

Ferrari Funeral Services are entrusted with arrangements.



Midewin NT Prairie opens additional areas to deer and turkey hunting

Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (NTP) in Wilmington is opening additional areas to hunting, starting with the fall 2026 deer hunting season, which begins October 1.

In previous years, hunters were restricted to an assigned zone. Starting with this fall's deer hunting season hunters will no longer register for a zone with each visit but will have access to approximately 17,000 acres that are open to the public. Maps of the new areas will be available at the Welcome Center located on Illinois 53 just north of Wilmington.

While the amount of land available to hunters has increased, what hasn't changed is the necessity for hunters to follow all Forest Service and Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) laws and regulations.

"We are happy to expand opportunities for the public to enjoy their public lands," said Robert West, Midewin NTP's Prairie Supervisor. "As with everything we do, safety is our top priority. Opening new areas to hunting doesn't change hunters' responsibility to hunt in a way

that's safe for everyone."

Deer archery season runs from Oct. 1 to Jan. 17 with breaks for firearm deer season Nov. 20-22 and Dec. 3 to 6.

All visitors, including hunters, are reminded to park at trailheads and designated areas without blocking gates or access points. All 30 miles of trails at the prairie are non-motorized, with 22 miles being multi-use for hiking, biking, and horseback riding and eight miles are pedestrian only.

The Wauponsee Glacial Trail, which runs along the eastern edge of Midewin NTP, is controlled by the Will County Forest Preserve which strictly prohibits firearms, bows and hunting on its land.

Midewin trails will remain open through all hunting seasons. Hikers, bikers, and horseback riders are encouraged to stay on the trails to ensure their safety. Hunters are reminded shooting is prohibited within 150 yards of any trail, building, developed recreation site, or occupied area.

Forest Service, IDNR, and Will County Forest Preserve law enforcement

will be patrolling the prairie during hunting seasons to enforce all county, state, and federal regulations.

The work of prairie restoration never stops, and there may be times areas of the prairie are closed to hunting due to prescribed fire or Forest Service operations. Check trailhead bulletin boards or call the Welcome Center to find out about areas that may be temporarily closed.

"We will continue to evaluate our hunting program into 2027," said West. "And we will work closely with IDNR to increase hunting and fishing opportunities that are in line with our restoration goals."

For the full list of Forest Service hunting rules at Midewin NTP visit www.fs.usda.gov/r09/midewin/safety-ethics/hunting-rules-regulations-and-guidelines

More information on hunting in Illinois, to include hunting permits, can be found online at <https://dnr.illinois.gov/hunting>

For questions or tips please contact the U.S. Forest Service Tip Line at 618-201-3364.

Fossil Ridge Library calendar

Adult Programs

Bingocize, 1-2 p.m. Every Tuesday starting Sept. 1. Looking for a fun new way to be more active?

Bingo + Exercise = Bingocize®, a health promotion program that combines the game of bingo with fall prevention exercise. Play bingo with us and meet new people while learning about techniques to reduce falls.

Tween Programs

Monday, Sept. 14- Tween Game night- 5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m. Join us at the library for the ultimate after-school mashup. Test your skills on the highly anticipated Nintendo Switch 2 with open multiplayer gaming, or take a break at our epic Mobile Art Cart loaded with DIY crafting supplies, stickers, and markers. Bring your friends, challenge your rivals, or just kick back and create. Open to students in 4th through 8th grade. Refreshments will be provided. **Registration is required to save your spot.**

Tuesday, Sept. 15 & 22- Community Helpers Storytime (Registration Required) 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. 275 W. Main St, Braidwood, on Sept. 15th. 21750 IL-113, Custer Park, on Sept. 22nd. Join us at the Braidwood Fire Protection District for a tour of the fire station. Meet Sparky, the

fire dog, and listen to stories read by the firefighters. Registration is required, and a caregiver must accompany their child.

Children & Toddler Programs

Wednesday, Sept. 9, 16, 23 & 30- (Registration Required) 10 a.m.-10:45

Little Learner's: Let's learn our ABCs! "Little Learners" is a fun, weekly program where preschoolers can master the alphabet through stories, music, and a craft. Join us as we explore the wonderful world of letters, one week at a time.

Thursday, Sept. 10, 17 & 24- (Registration required) Toddler Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. We welcome toddlers and their caregivers to join us weekly to explore various toys and sensory materials. Toddlers can enhance their gross and fine motor skills, social interaction, and language

skills. Caregivers must accompany their little ones throughout the program.

Listen and Create Storytime 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. This program is specially designed for children aged 3-8. Every week, children can explore new books and engage in a fun craft project. Please make sure to dress in clothes that can get messy, as the craft project will involve getting creative with various art materials.

Saturday, Sept. 12- 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Children's Costume Swap: Halloween is around the corner! Swap out the costumes your children have outgrown for something new. Stop by the library to see what you might be able to find! Costumes should be in good condition. Please make sure the items are freshly washed.

Mum flower fundraiser

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

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

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

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

Plants can hear with no ears

Dear EarthTalk: Can plants actually "hear" pollinators nearby and open up accordingly and can we harness this knowledge to help pollinators and plants thrive?

-- Peter B., Bloomfield, CT



As pollinator populations face steep global declines due to habitat loss, pesticides and climate change, scientists are exploring surprising ways plants may be helping themselves, as well as their insect partners, thrive.

Recent research suggests that some plants may actually be able to detect the sounds of nearby pollinators and respond by boosting nectar production. This discovery opens up new possibilities for agriculture, conservation, and our understanding of how plants interact with the world.

Although plants don't have ears, they can sense vibrations in their environment, including sound waves in the air.

In a 2024 study,



RECENT RESEARCH SUGGESTS that some plants, such as this evening primrose, may actually be able to detect the sounds of nearby pollinators and respond by boosting nectar production.

researchers found that the evening primrose (*Oenothera drummondii*) increased the sugar concentration of its nectar within just three minutes of being exposed to sound frequencies mimicking bee wingbeats. Interestingly, when the flower petals were removed, the response disappeared, suggesting that petals themselves act as acoustic sensors.

This form of "hearing" allows plants to dynamically adjust their offerings based on the likelihood of being visited, effectively making their nectar more appealing to pollinators.

As National Geographic reported, it's a fast and targeted response to a specific ecological cue, and it's now considered one of the most direct examples of plant bioacoustics.

More recent studies suggest that plants can detect and respond to pollinator sounds in surprisingly specific ways. Francesca Barbero, a professor of zoology at the University of Turin, explains that "plants could improve their reproductive success if their responses drive modifications in pollinator behavior."

Additional studies have shown that even some non-flowering plants may respond to mechanical vibrations in their surroundings.

A 2025 report highlighted new evidence that even some non-flowering species respond to mechanical vibrations in their environment.

One 2024 working paper proposed using pollinator sound simulations in greenhouses to trigger nectar production in crops like berries and tomatoes. This offers a potential tool for improving yields without chemicals.

If developed further, such applications could help support pollinators, reduce pesticide use, and optimize crop health naturally. Researchers are thinking about "sound gardens" where speakers mimic pollinator wingbeats to stimulate plants into a more receptive state.

Scientists caution that we don't yet fully understand the mechanisms behind these responses or how consistent they are in real-world environments. Others warn against overstating things, as these are unconscious biochemical responses.

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Operation Firm Handshake plans annual Veterans Picnic

Veterans from across Illinois and their families are invited to Coal City on Saturday, Sept. 12, for a day of food, fellowship and recognition during the 13th annual Operation Firm Handshake Veterans Picnic.

The free event will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 1500 N. Broadway St. at the Coal City Area Club. Organizers bill the gathering as Illinois' largest free veterans picnic, bringing together veterans from all branches of the military, active-duty service members and their families.

Now in its 13th year, Operation Firm Handshake is organized by local Grundy County veterans as a way to recognize those who have served while giving veterans an opportunity to reconnect with old



friends and meet others who share the bond of military service.

A pig roast will serve as the main course, with refreshments also provided throughout the day. Those attending are encouraged to bring their appetites and lawn chairs and settle in for an afternoon of activities.

The picnic will feature door prizes, a 50/50 drawing, entertainment and a

bean bag tournament. Organizers are also planning plenty of activities and entertainment for children, making the gathering an event for the entire family.

Representatives of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Space Force are represented in the event's invitation, emphasizing that veterans of all branches and eras of service are welcome.

The purpose behind Operation Firm Handshake remains much the same as when the picnic began — providing veterans with a place to meet, share stories and receive recognition for their service to the nation.

For additional information or to volunteer, contact Fred Gaddis at (815) 374-0302 or Mary Gaddis at (815) 351-3125.

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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Join us Sept. 17 at 9:30 a.m. for our ribbon-cutting and open house at our Morris location, 1515 Creek Dr, Morris, IL 60450.

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port through every stage of your journey, from diagnosis to recovery.

Hope & Healing Cancer Services clinic at 1515 Creek Dr, Morris, IL is led by Dr. Srilata Gundala and supported by Matthew Toman, APRN, are now accepting new cancer patients.

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A Giant adventure Down Under



Photo by Matthew Youell

THE BEES WERE BUZZING with joy during a recent visit by the Gemini Giant to a mesmerizing flowering canola farm in Woomargama, Australia. This Share-A-Shot photo, along with two others, were submitted by Matthew Youell who lives in Australia and has a The Gemini Giant replica from Wilmington. Youell's other photos of the Giant were taken while visiting the giant Magpie statue in Euroa, Australia and the Mary Poppins statue in Bowral. "The giant magpie is named Swoop the Big Barrwarrang to pay tribute to our local Taungurung Aboriginal people - meaning magpie in their language. The Australian magpie is known to swoop on anyone to protect their nest and their yodelling melody," Youell said. "The Mary Poppins statue commemorates author P.L. Travers' magical fairytale, where she conceived the famous folktale as a youth growing up in the town of Bowral." Submit interesting Share-A-Photos by email to freepress604@gmail.com.

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WHS Class of 1957 to hold reunion

Members of the Wilmington High School Class of 1957 are being invited to turn back the clock and spend an afternoon catching up with old friends during an upcoming class reunion.

The reunion will be held Saturday, Sept. 19, from noon to 4 p.m. at Nellie's Restaurant and Old School Brewery, 110 Bridge St. in Wilmington.

Organizers say the gathering will provide classmates with an opportunity to see one another again, renew old friendships and spend a few hours reminiscing about their Wilmington High School days.

A \$15 cover charge will be collected at the door

and includes a meal of pulled pork, Italian beef, baked beans and coleslaw.

The invitation is open to members of the Class of 1957 and their guests. Reunion organizers are also asking classmates to spread the word, particularly to former classmates who may not have received an invitation.

Those planning to attend — as well as those unable to make the reunion — are asked to contact Jim Johnston (815) 476-7572 or email johnstonjames132@yahoo.com, or Marilyn 708-289-5613, so organizers can get an accurate count and confirm current contact information.

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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Legislature needs to question its Inspector General

The legislature needs to question its own Inspector General over allegations made by declared sexual harassment victims. In the past week or so, three women have told stories about their dissatisfaction with the way they were treated by the state's Legislative Inspector General. And it's clear that at least three of the four legislative leaders are quickly becoming fed up with the LIG and that another leader may have trouble sustaining his claim that one of his members was cleared of wrongdoing.



Rich Miller

You may have seen the Chicago Tribune story about an unnamed female lobbyist who formally objected to the way she was treated by Legislative Inspector General Michael McCuskey during his sexual harassment probe of now-former Rep. Harry Benton.

The lobbyist sent a letter to the four legislative leaders at the end of July claiming McCuskey had "violated the confidence of other victims and me, broke standard investigative norms, and made inappropriate comments" to her. "Specifically," she wrote, McCuskey "shared the names of the other victims and other confidential information about their cases with me without prompting, among other inappropriate statements and missteps."

The day after that story was published, my associate Isabel Miller reached

out to Laura Jackson, who claimed she was sexually harassed by Rep. Amy "Murri" Briel (D-Ottawa) and made other allegations, including how drugs were provided to campaign workers.

Jackson worked on Briel's 2024 campaign and then served as Rep. Briel's deputy chief of staff. LIG McCuskey ruled that her allegations were "unfounded" and Rep. Briel said the ruling proved everything Jackson said was false and the House Democrats began unapologetically ramping up support for Briel in her second race against Republican Liz Bishop.

Jackson told Isabel that she, too, had experienced some of the same McCuskey behavior as the unnamed lobbyist. McCuskey, she said, "shared other stories from other people and their experiences with [Briel]."

Jackson also said McCuskey claimed Rep. Briel was "crazy." Asked about that, Jackson insisted that McCuskey "verbatim called [Briel] 'crazy' and... was telling me about the things that they were saying on their side in the interviews but he definitely called her crazy to me."

Jackson said McCuskey's stories were "very validating in a sense because it was like he was telling me, 'Here's all these other shared experiences, don't worry.'"

"I don't remember if he did tell me names [of other accusers]," Jackson said. "He spoke about, I think it was like an environmental lobbyist group that

had a lot of issues with her, and he told me about that. He shared with me about a story I had already known... about Briel yelling at one of Pritzker's staff openly and just like berating him openly, but I don't think he told me that staff's name."

We reached out to all four legislative leaders and showed them Ms. Jackson's quotes. Three responded.

I asked Senate President Don Harmon's spokesperson whether the Briel LIG investigation should be revisited: "Central to our ethics laws is that victims and witnesses know they will be treated with respect, confidentiality and professionalism in this process. We would encourage the Legislative Ethics Commission to take the appropriate steps to uphold those standards."

The Legislative Ethics Commission is empowered by state law to request further investigation of a case by the Legislative Inspector General.

The commission, which is equally divided between the two parties, also has the power to request an investigation by the Illinois Attorney General.

Asked the same question about whether the Briel LIG investigation should be revisited, House Minority Leader Tony McCombie's spokesperson issued a one-word response: "Yes."

Senate Minority Leader John Curran also weighed in: "Yes, the LEC should reopen the investigation and ensure that all appropriate steps were taken, including referring any criminal activity to the appropriate law enforcement agency."

House Speaker Chris Welch's office did not

respond to a request for comment.

As a matter of policy, the LIG does not respond to news media inquiries about specific details of cases.

And then yet another woman who filed a detailed sexual harassment complaint against a different House Democrat a few years ago sent us a statement corroborating many of the complaints against Legislative Inspector General McCuskey, who also deemed her allegations "unfounded."

"His treatment of victims is unacceptable," she wrote. "The LIG kept telling me he was a federal judge, and that I made him look incompetent and questioned his integrity of investigating... If someone really comes forward with a serious sexual assault or a big case, nobody should have to talk to him."

The legislature needs to get to the bottom of this.

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

Dietitian to discuss nutrition for GLP-1 users

In collaboration with the Morris Hospital YMCA, Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers is presenting an important nutrition seminar for individuals who take appetite suppressant GLP-1 medications.

The free seminar, "Nutrition Tips for GLP-1 Success," will be presented by a Morris Hospital dietitian on Wednesday, Sept. 16, from 4:30-5:30 p.m. at the Morris Hospital YMCA, 2200 W. Dupont Ave.,

Morris.

The program is open to everyone.

While GLP-1 medications can help reduce appetite, it's important for people who are taking the medications to practice healthy habits through smart nutrition and practical lifestyle strategies.

To register call 815-705-7358 or go to www.morrishospital.org/events and select the nutrition category.

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 Rd. 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.

The Mobile Food Pantry will use a "drive thru" method to distribute pre-packed groceries.

For more information about Catholic Charities, please visit catholiccharitiesjoliet.org.

Emergency sewer repair completed following utility line damage

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

An emergency sewer repair on Kankakee River Drive has been completed and paid for after a utility contractor accidentally damaged a sanitary sewer main and service line during construction work in July.

The work was performed by Conley Excavating & Construction of Morris, which repaired a section of sewer infrastruc-

ture after a contractor drilling operation struck both an 8-inch sanitary sewer main and a 6-inch service line.

According to the invoice submitted to the City of Wilmington, the damage occurred July 15, 2026, during utility installation activities. Conley Excavating was called in to complete the repair and restore service.

The total cost of the emergency repair was \$8,934.90.

City Administrator Melissa Wiak informed the council that the damage was the result of the contractor's negligence during the installation of fiber optic cable at the site.

"So, let's just approve this tonight, and then we will go after them for reimbursement," Wiak said.

The payment covers labor, equipment and materials associated with repairing the damaged sewer main and service connection.



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& Food Trucks

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Illinois Capitol renovations set to wrap up this winter

BY BRENDEN MOORE
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — Nearly five years after construction crews started moving dirt on the \$350 million renovation of the Illinois State Capitol's north wing, there are finally glimmers of light at the end of the tunnel.

The massive project, which included a rehab of the Illinois Senate chamber, construction of a new underground parking garage and conference room and the creation of a new main entrance with enhanced security features, will wrap up "sometime this winter," Architect of the Capitol Andrea Aggertt told Capitol News Illinois in an interview this week.

"We are slightly behind," Aggertt said. "As with everything, it's almost like we're on an archeological site. You don't know what you're going to find until you get into it."

There's been progress: The Senate returned to its refurbished digs on schedule in January 2025. And the \$46 million, 435-space parking garage for legislators and staff opened this spring — more than two years later than anticipated. Under the updated timetable, the entire project will be complete about two years behind schedule.

Despite overruns on time, Aggertt said the project, funded by the Rebuild Illinois capital construction program, is "within that budget" and they "don't anticipate going over that."

'Surprises'

Labor shortages attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and a scarcity of specific materials necessary to renovate a 150-year-old building contributed to the slowdown, Aggertt said. Not to mention the weather. Multiple heavy rain events this summer set the construction timeline back another several weeks. And then there were several unanticipated "surprises" that Aggertt and her team were confronted with as construction progressed.

Among them: The discovery of wrought iron trusses that were apparently hidden behind walls for more than a century. Their presence was not even unearthed during the last major renovation of the north wing in the 1970s. But the trusses, it turns out, play a critical role supporting the Capitol's mansard roof.

So, they had to pivot, working around those structural components and reallocating floor plans while making sure they



Capitol News Illinois photo by Jerry Nowicki

A NEW SECURE entrance on the north side of the Illinois Capitol is under construction. The Capitol architect's office says construction should be done this winter, five years after it began.

would be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"There have been things that we did not anticipate," Aggertt said. "We also had staff and members in offices all the way until the time we started construction. So that means our first chance to look behind walls that nobody had seen for 70 years was at that point, and that also led to surprises that we had to overcome, which I'm proud to say that the group that we have working, the general contractors, the subcontractors, all the union tradesmen and women, have done a great job to complete that."

Most of the work inside the north wing is now complete, including the removal of mezzanines added in the 1960s and 1970s that subdivided floors with lofty ceilings. This will result in less office space in the Capitol but restore the building's original look.

Detailing work is done and new carpeting has been installed with furniture to be delivered to the refurbished north wing

in the coming months, Aggertt said.

A casualty of this restoration? The Capitol office of former President Barack Obama, who served in the Illinois Senate from 1997 to 2004. Aggertt said it would've been "impossible" to maintain that one space while gutting everything else around it.

What's left?

The renovations of the third through sixth floors is complete with construction still wrapping up on the first and second floors along with the new underground conference center and welcome center, Aggertt said.

Work has finally begun on the removal of the paved north drive. Its tear-up had been pushed to the back of the queue so construction crews could utilize it.

The drive once included parking spots for senators and staff and was a popular pick-up and drop-off location, first with horse-drawn carriages and later cars.

But in an era of heightened security

threats, the drive allowed cars too close to the building and it will thus be replaced with a sidewalk that'll allow pedestrian access to the building from Second and Monroe streets.

Security enhancements were a key consideration in the details of the renovation.

The new north wing entrance, which will serve as the main gateway into the building, will feature an attached welcome center that will allow the Secretary of State's police to screen visitors before they enter the Capitol itself. There will be two security lines to better accommodate large groups and a dedicated drop-off lane for tour buses on Monroe Street.

The new space will include an information desk, a cafe, public restrooms and a room where visitors can start their tour of the building with an informational video.

"Our plan is that when groups do come into the Capitol building, there would hopefully be a video or two that they can watch... about this construction, maybe the original construction" and "some of the more notable officials that have served in the Illinois State Capitol building," Aggertt said.

Like any building, the Capitol requires regular upkeep and maintenance, Aggertt said. Before this, the Capitol's west wing underwent a \$50 million renovation between 2011 and 2013.

Aggertt said there's no funding allocated yet for future work, but she said the building's east wing will need a refurbishment like the north wing within the next decade. They'll soon need to replace the roof of the Capitol dome, which hasn't had any major work done on it since the 1970s.

If there's anything she wants people to take away from the renovation, Aggertt said it's the "beauty of the original architecture."

"So, unfortunately, over the last several decades, mezzanines were added," and "walls were painted white," Aggertt said. "So we had the cool opportunity to take a deeper look at all those layers of paint and determine what was originally there. So everyone's going to be able to see that now."

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

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- A way of looking
- Properly
- Rolled steel
- Not down
- Law degree
- Consume food
- Intermediate ecological stage
- Old world, new
- Dispense justice
- Stiff hair-like structure
- Ethiopia
- Cool!

CLUES DOWN

- Boxing's GOAT
- Zero
- Midway between north and northeast
- Concurred
- Added flavor
- Amount of time
- Eggs of parasitic insects
- S-shaped moldings
- Atomic #45
- ___ d'art: small artistic item
- A godparent's "kids"
- Nocturnal burrowing lizard
- Hit lightly
- Aircrafts
- Witness
- Alluding to something
- Take to the limit
- Baglike structure in a plant or animal
- Start over
- Administered
- Romanian monetary unit
- Unit of liquid capacity
- Equips with weapons again
- Disney town
- Female deer
- Title of respect
- A place to go rafting
- A way to conclude
- Type of television
- Georgia rockers
- Leonhard ___, Swiss mathematician
- Slang for gun
- River in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bar bill
- Small, gray-headed crow
- Frozen water
- Norwegian krone
- Commercial

CLUES ACROSS

- Father
- An enthusiastic devotee of sports
- Holm oak
- Be united
- Rattling breaths
- Supermarket chain
- Provided with a quality
- Samoan monetary unit
- Swiss river
- Hill (Celtic)
- Have already done
- ATM company
- Syngman ___, Korean president
- Very willing
- Arctic explorers (abbr.)

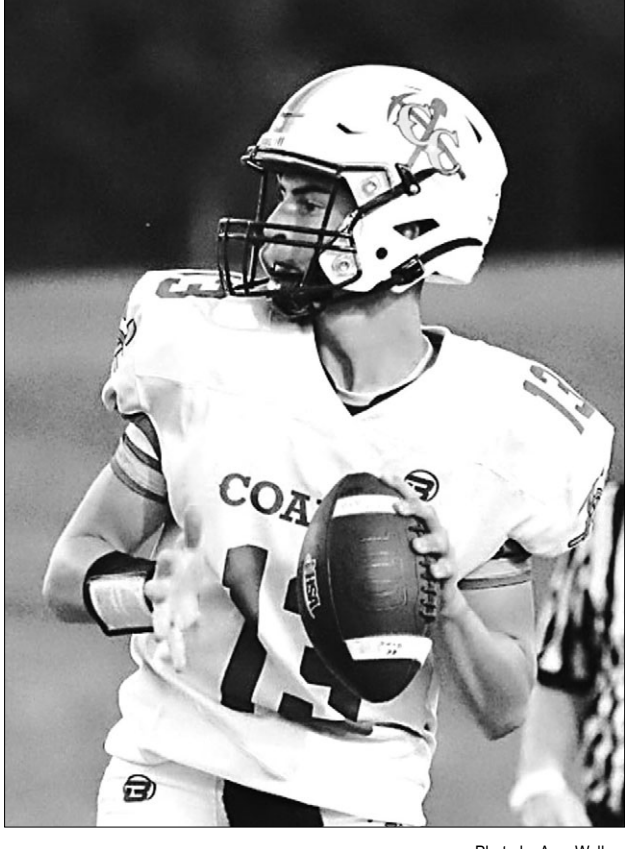
SUDOKU - Here's how it works:

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



COAL CITY'S Brody D'Orazio (left), AJ McGarvey (30) and Emmett Easton take down the Lisle ball carrier during Friday's game. The Coalers won 39-14 and will host Streator on Friday.



COAL CITY QUARTERBACK Connor Henline looks to a pass during Friday's game against Lisle. Henline threw for 110 yards total.

Quick strike Coalers too much for Lisle

BY JIM SHELDON
SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

Lisle (2-1) possessed the ball for all but 16 seconds in the first quarter of the Illinois Central Eight conference opener Friday against Coal City (2-1).

The host Lions scored two touchdowns in that span, but the Coalers made their possessions count as they rattled off 32 unanswered points en route to a 39-14 win.

"Lisle did a great job early on hiding the ball. We had to adjust defensively. They did a good job keeping the ball away from us by controlling the time of possession all night," said head coach Francis Loughran.

"Our offense was extremely efficient which helped us. Defensively, we had kind of a slow start, but our offense was very good all night."

A two-yard touchdown run by Payton Swartzendruber got the scoring started, but it took

just one play for the Coalers to respond as quarterback Connor Henline connected with sophomore Maddox Meents for a 60-yard touchdown pass, one of five touchdown drives under 1:30 for the visitors.

"I thought we controlled the line of scrimmage offensively with guys like Brody D'Orazio, Sean Bergin and Maxx Kramer among those that really opened some holes for our running backs."

"Logan Natyshok had a very good night so did Aiden Scrogam with their limited carries. We had that big play potential on offense and I thought our guys took advantage."

Lisle answered with a drive that took over seven minutes as Nathaniel Garcia broke away for a 14-yard score. He accounted for 78 yards, all in the first quarter.

This time it took just 1:09 for Coal City to tie things up as Natyshok scored on a 40-yard run, the start of 32 straight points

for the visitors.

He added a 10-yard touchdown run four minutes later, part of a four carry, 72 yard night.

Scrogam punched in a two-yard score just before half for a 26-14 advantage after 24 minutes. Scrogam made the most of his three rushes accumulating 50 yards.

Kole Carpenter took the second half kickoff 78 yards to the house for an early three-score edge.

"That was good to see. I thought that was the best our kick return looked all year. Great blocks by Ethan Donnelly and Natyshok," said Loughran.

"Carpenter was able to field the kick and take it to the house. It's not just offensively, but special teams wise, we have some very athletic players that are able to make good plays at any time."

Back-up quarterback Tyce Farrell broke away for a 44-yard touchdown run midway through the third which led to a running

clock at the request of Lisle.

"They had only dressed 20 players and had a few guys get dinged up plus the heat. I was just happy to finish the game. I'm glad that we were able to get some guys some some important varsity minutes and it was just a good total team effort."

"Farrell did a great job coming in being able to score on that long run and it's good to see a lot of different guys were involved throughout the night."

Henline completed all three of his passes to Meents for 110 yards.

Meents and Donnelly both had a two-yard run as the Coalers accounted for 280 total yards. Lisle ran for 217 yards with the majority coming in the first half.

Defensively, D'Orazio led a strong effort with eight tackles and Patrick Osipavicius was right behind him with seven. Ryker Long made six and Scrogam had five. Tyler Phillips and Gage Kraus both tallied four and

Meents, Leriyahn Ocasio and Emmett Easton all added three.

Josh Kosch, Cooper Morris, Carpenter, Donnelly, AJ McGarvey, Theo Fritz, Cayden Winke and Gavin Clubb all recorded two and also in on a stop were Farrell, Keaton Berta, Alex Carlson, Jakob Phillips, Cameron Minuth and Bergin.

"Tough loss week two, but the guys refocused. It's good to get that first one in conference, and now we are just trying to keep the momentum going the right direction."

The Coalers will welcome Streator (1-2) to town Friday for Senior Night.

They were shut out 28-0 by Reed-Custer last week and held to just 87 total yards while giving up 266 rushing yards.

"It's going to be kind of the same thing for us as far as getting our running backs involved with Natyshok and Scroggs opening up the passing game for Henline to hope-

fully find some weapons in Meents and Braden Walker," said Loughran.

"Defensively, a little bit different offense this week, and our defensive line really gets it started for us. Guys like Easton and Berta to control that line of scrimmage and hopefully create some opportunities for our linebackers like D'Orazio, Scrogam and Tyler Phillips."

Quarterback Sam LeRette is the focal point of their offense and containing him will be key so Carpenter and Morris in the secondary will have a challenge with the Bulldogs' athletic receivers.

Last week, the heat greatly affected the practice schedule for area teams so a return to normalcy will be welcome for the Coalers.

"We were after school inside one day, in the morning another day, and another day outside with no equipment so hopefully we can get back in that routine and just get our consistency back."



ON THE BALL for the Coal City tennis team is Vanna Liebermann who plays #2 doubles with partner Aubrey Jensen

Coalers blank Peotone, 13-0

Coal City Middle School's eighth-grade softball team made quick work of Peotone on Monday, Aug. 31, rolling to a 13-0 victory in four innings.

The Coalers jumped on the Blue Devils from the start, scoring six runs in the bottom of the first inning. They added one in the second before putting the game away with another six-run outburst in the third.

Coal City finished with nine hits while taking advantage of eight walks. The Coaler defense played error-free ball, while pitchers H. Caise and R. Padavano combined to limit Peotone to just one hit.

Padavano helped her own cause at the plate, going 2-for-3 with three RBIs and two runs scored.

G. Colabuona also had a big day, finishing 2-for-2 with an RBI, while K. Cuddy went 1-for-1, scored twice, drove in a run and drew two walks.

E. Munsell had a hit, an RBI and scored once, while A. Hines drove in two

runs. R. Watson added a hit, RBI and run scored, and R. Kargle contributed a hit and scored once.

H. Fisher drove in two runs, while R. Aldridge scored twice and H. Caise crossed the plate three times. The Coalers totaled 13 runs on nine hits and drew eight walks.

Caise was dominant in the circle during her two innings of work. She didn't allow a hit or walk while striking out four of the six batters she faced.

Padavano took over for the final two innings and was nearly as effective, surrendering just one hit with no walks while striking out two.

Together the Coal City pitchers faced only 12 batters over four innings, allowing one hit and no walks while striking out six. Caise was credited with the victory.

It was a complete performance for the Coalers, who combined strong pitching with an offense that scored in each of its three trips to the plate.

Coalers beat the heat, dominate home quad

It wasn't just the competition the Coal City girls tennis team had to overcome during its home quadrangular.

With temperatures hovering near 100 degrees, the Lady Coalers endured the heat while piling up 16 victories to easily claim first place over Princeton, Rockford Christian and Mendota.

Coal City nearly doubled the total of runner-up Princeton, which finished with eight wins. Rockford Christian was third with seven, followed by Mendota with five.

The Coalers were especially dominant in the No. 2 and No. 3 singles positions and the top two doubles flights, going undefeated in all four.

Kayla Stalter turned in one of the strongest performances of the day at No. 2 singles, finishing 3-0 while surrendering only six games. She defeated Princeton's Daphnie Grant 10-1, Rockford Christian's Addie Graf 10-4 and

Mendota's Leah Henkel 10-1.

Freshman Charly Gray was equally impressive at No. 3 singles. Gray improved her strong start to the season with three victories, defeating Princeton's Kaylee Tanner and Mendota's Sam Tunk by identical 10-2 scores. She closed with a 10-1 victory over Coal City teammate Lauren Jacovec.

At No. 1 singles, Melody Leman went 2-1 and was involved in one of the most competitive matches of the tournament.

Leman opened with back-to-back 10-5 victories over Mendota's Emily Sondgeroth and Princeton's Karlie Schultz before facing undefeated Aurora Yeung of Rockford Christian.

The two battled through a number of lengthy deuce points before Yeung eventually pulled away for a 10-5 victory. Yeung went undefeated in the quad, but Leman's two victories added impor-

tant points to Coal City's winning total.

Coal City's doubles teams were even tougher.

Kyla Stark and Lanie Winke swept the No. 1 doubles competition without allowing an opponent to win more than three games. They defeated Mendota's Emily Diaz and Parker Stavropoulos 10-3 and Princeton's Ava Munson and Anna Ellis 10-2.

Stark and Winke saved their most dominant performance for last, blanking Rockford Christian's Avery Malcolm and Alyssa Meyers, 10-0, to complete their perfect 3-0 day.

Aubrey Jensen and Vanna Liebermann also went undefeated at No. 2 doubles. The Coaler duo posted matching 10-3 victories against Mendota and Princeton before finishing with a 10-6 win over Rockford Christian's Grace Li and Olivia Vang.

Coal City received two more victories from Brooklyn Adams and Adyson Planeta at No. 3

doubles. They defeated Mendota's Karla Ascensio and Mallory Beck 10-4 before falling 10-1 to Princeton's Piper Hansen and Izabelle Luft.

Adams and Planeta bounced right back in their final match, defeating Rockford Christian's Emerson Lara and Johanna Flores 10-4 to finish 2-1.

All told, Coal City's primary lineup went 16-2 on the day, with four positions — Stalter at No. 2 singles, Gray at No. 3 singles, Stark and Winke at No. 1 doubles and Jensen and Liebermann at No. 2 doubles — completing perfect 3-0 performances.

Doing it under sweltering conditions made the championship showing even more impressive as the Coalers continue to build momentum early in the season.

Team standings: Coal City 16, Princeton 8, Rockford Christian 7, Mendota 5.



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COALER SPORTS

Lady Coalers battle through busy week

It was a productive week for the Coal City volleyball team as the Lady Coalers played seven matches over five days, winning five and improving to 9-4 overall.

Coal City opened the week Tuesday by kicking off Illinois Central Eight Conference play with a convincing 25-19, 25-14 victory over Lisle.

The Lady Coalers improved to 5-2 overall and

1-0 in the conference behind a balanced effort at the net and service line.

Ashlyn Siron directed the offense with 11 assists, while Averie Hodgen led the attack with seven kills. Margaret Carlson and Leah Aldridge added three kills apiece, Darcie Ladas had two and Lilly Gerrish contributed one.

Aldridge led Coal City at the service line with 12 points. Ladas collected

seven service points, including three aces, while Alivia Waliczek had six points and an ace. Carlson added four points and an ace.

Olivia Ferrari anchored the defense with five digs, while Aldridge and Siron had four apiece.

Coal City was back on its home court Thursday and had to rally after dropping the opening set against Streator.

The Coalers did just that, bouncing back for a 19-25, 25-16, 25-22 victory to improve to 6-2. Siron recorded 19 assists, nine digs and two aces, while Ladas powered the offense with 12 kills to go along with seven digs and a solo block. Aldridge contributed nine digs.

From there Coal City headed to Villa Park for the Willowbrook Tournament, where the Coalers packed five matches.

Coal City opened tournament play Friday against host Willowbrook. The Coalers stayed within striking distance but fell in straight sets, 25-18, 25-21.

Coal City then pushed Glenbard South to three sets. After dropping the opener 25-21, the Coalers answered with a 25-19 victory to force a deciding third set. Glenbard South took control in the finale, winning 15-2 to hand Coal City its second loss of the day.

The Lady Coalers didn't let the two setbacks spoil their tournament.

Coal City rebounded against Trinity, winning a tight two-set match 25-20, 29-27, and carried that momentum into Saturday.

The Coalers opened Saturday with a dominant 25-11, 25-22 victory over West Chicago before finishing their tournament with another straight-set victory, defeating Glenbard North 25-20, 25-19.

The three consecutive

tournament victories allowed Coal City to close out the week at 9-4 overall and 2-0 in the Illinois Central Eight Conference.

Siron was a key piece of the Coal City offense throughout the Willowbrook Tournament, totaling 74 assists while adding 23 service points, six aces and 20 digs.

Aldridge was the

Coalers' leading hitter during the tournament with 34 kills while contributing 25 digs. Ladas totaled 19 kills, three blocks, 35 service points, seven aces and 16 digs, while Hodgen finished with 19 kills, 22 service points, two aces and 22 digs.

Carlson added 17 kills, three blocks and 12 service points, while Ferrari led the

back-row effort with 29 digs.

Coal City also received 26 assists from Avery Male, 10 digs from Reese Symons and four kills and a block from Avery Hines during the tournament.

Coal City has a big match on Thursday when Manteno, who is leading the conference, comes to town.



Photo by Amy Walker

LADY COALER Ashlyn Siron sets the ball during Thursday's game against Streator. Siron had a total of 19 assists.



Photo by Amy Walker

LADY COALER Darcie Ladas leaps for the ball at the net on Thursday. Ladas led the offense with 12 kills.



Photo by Amy Walker

COAL CITY'S Wyatt Homerding plays defense against Streator opponent during Thursday's game. Coal City plays at Beecher tonight.

Coal City soccer rebounds with a victory over Streator

The Coal City Coalers boys soccer team picked up an important 2-1 conference victory over Streator Thursday night, improving their season record to 4-2.

Nick Pfeiffer led the way offensively for the Coalers, scoring one goal and adding an assist. Coal City's second goal came late in the second half when Cam Schott found the back of the net for the game-winner in his varsity debut.

Carter Nicholson turned in a strong performance in goal, recording seven saves while also contributing an assist to the Coal City attack.

The Coalers battled throughout the night and held on for the 2-1 victory, earning their fourth win of the season.

Coal City will return to action next week when they travel to Beecher follow-

ing the long weekend

On Monday night, Coal City soccer fought through injuries and sickness and played a solid game but came up short to Lisle 4-3.

Creed Macaluso had 2 goals, with Nick Pfeiffer adding 1. Carter Hollis had all 3 assists on the night.

Coal City travels to Beecher on Wednesday for a 4:30 p.m. nonconference contest.

The schedule picks up again the following week when the Coalers travel to Reed-Custer on Tuesday, Sept. 15, for a 6 p.m. conference match before hosting Manteno on Thursday, Sept. 17, at 6 p.m.

Coal City freshmen finish 2nd at invite

The Coal City freshmen volleyball team finished 2nd in the Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School Freshmen Invite.

They won 1st in their pool defeating the home team BBCHS 25-11; 25-15 and Tri-Point 25-8; 25-11. They faced Gardner-South Wilmington in the championship to fall in a heartbreaker 11-25; 24-25.

The matches from the weekend move the Coalers' record to 5-2 overall for the season.

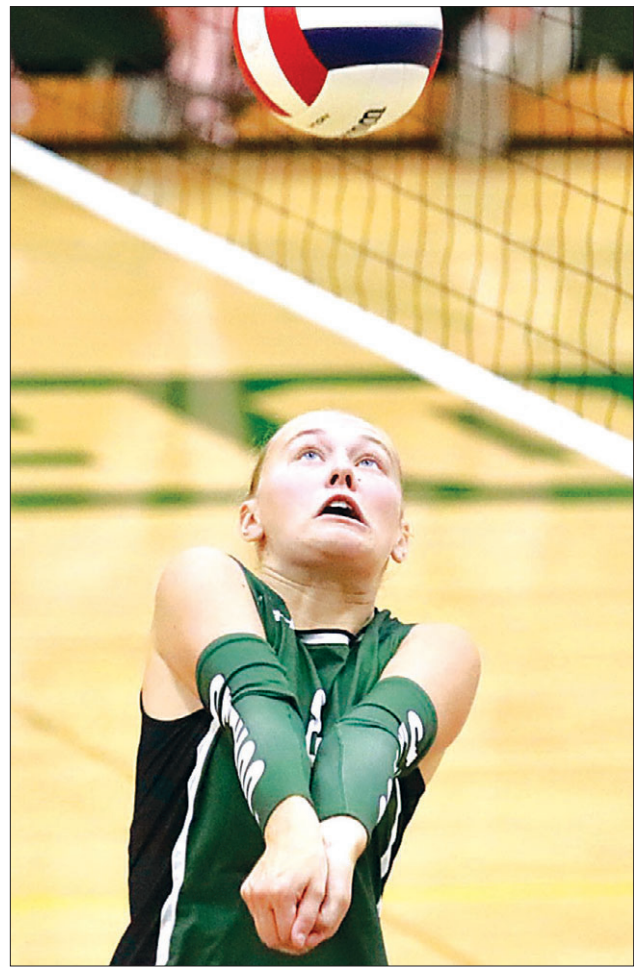


Photo by Amy Walker

LADY COALER Margaret Carlson bumps the ball during Thursday's game against Streator. Coal City will host Manteno on Thursday.



Photo by Amy Walker

COALER AJ KENNEY hustles to gain control of the ball during Thursday's game.