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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2020

| A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER

Lower tax rate for Coal City property owners

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

The Coal City Village Board approved its tax levy at \$2.73 million during its final meeting of 2020. The request of the town's taxpayers represents a 8.27% increase over the prior year, however property owners will actually see a small decrease in the tax rate.

Village Administrator Matt Fritz said a projected increase in the taxable assessed valuation of the village would result in the tax rate falling slightly.

The levy presented on Dec. 9 was prepared to reflect a 10% increase although the estimated equalized assessed value [EAV] for Coal City is projected by the county assessor to increase 16%.

Fritz said, "the projected increase in EAV is difficult to predict because although the assessor's estimated report on EAV throughout

Grundy County has been provided, its increase will likely decline much as occurred in 2019."

The projected increase results in \$30,852 being provided for general fund operations. At a 10% increase in EAV the tax rate would reflect a 3 cent reduction in the rate, and should the final assessment remain above 10%, the rate would fall more.

The village had initially proposed an 8.8% hike but in the days leading up to levy approval the numbers were adjusted to reduce the overall increase, while still collecting the funds necessary to meet the needs of the village.

Within the 8.27% increase, Fritz reports 6.8% is within the operational funds.

One of the large items within the levy is the police pension. To fund at the actuarial level the village will collect \$632,000, a 7.8% increase from the 2019 levy that sought a taxpayer contribution of \$586,497. The pension fund was established several years ago by a vote of the vil-

lage taxpayers.

The levy also reflects a large increase in workman's compensation coverage and that, according to Fritz, has to do with outstanding claims. This year the village is seeking to collect \$146,389 for the fund, an amount that represents a 94.5% increase from the prior year.

"To offset and to keep the levy in check, we're going to utilize fund balance for both IMRF [Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund] and Social Security, its something that we talked about during the levy [development], lessening what's taken in this year to lessen the overall levy," Fritz said.

The approved tax revenue plan notes a 28.8% reduction in the amount sought for IMRF and 16.3% fewer dollars for Social Security. Combined its a savings of just over \$63,300.

Out of the 13 levy line items, those are the only two that will see reductions this year with four others—parks, audit, street lighting and

Prairie Oaks—will remain at the prior year funding levels.

The approved levy calls for 10% increases to the corporate and police protection line items with total funds sought at \$339,113 and \$101,734 respectively.

A 12% increase is sought for liability insurance with a levy request of \$173,810, 11.1% for the street and bridge fund that seeks \$81,387 and 12.63% to cover the tornado recovery bond payment.

This year's bond and interest payment of \$792,250 on the tornado recovery and refinancing of stormwater project bonds marks the last step in total debt being collected annually.

"Following this year's increase, the annual debt payment will remain similar until the debt issuance is repaid with its last levy in 2029," Fritz said.

As projected, the rate paid by taxpayers is

SEE LEVY, PAGE 2



Photo by Ann Gill

THE KEENAN FAMILY is back with their newest venture—La Tavola, an Italian deli and bakery. Based on the concept of their original eatery, Antonia's, the family will be cooking up Italian favorites, slicing up specialty meats and cheeses and sending out sweet treats. Antonia Keenan [left] is joined in the business by her son, Nicholas [left] who will oversee the kitchen, with additional assistance from sons, Anthony and Jonathan and fellow family members. LaTavola is open at 1011 E. Division St., in Coal City's Berta Crossing Shopping Plaza.

Take a seat at La Tavola

Familiar faces to serve up old favorites, new flavors at Italian eatery

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

Tavola—the Italian word for table—is the foundation of a new eatery opening in Coal City. In this case, coming together around the table is the cornerstone on which the deli and bakery is based.

On Tuesday morning, the Keenan family opened the doors to LaTavola, their newest venture in the food service business.

Familiar faces will serve up old favorites and new flavors from a storefront shop at 1011 E. Division St., in Coal City's Berta Crossing Shopping Plaza.

It's been about a dozen years since the Keenan's closed the kitchen at their popular Braidwood restaurant — Antonia's, but they never left the industry just choosing to travel in a different direction for a while.

During that time Nicholas Keenan was developing his culinary skills and will bring that into the new restaurant that will feature some of Antonia's most popular items including eggplant parmesan, football sized pizza puffs, cannoli and coffee cakes.

Antonia Keenan said she's been wanting to get back into the restaurant business the past four years, but the timing wasn't right until now.

It was a conversation with a man from church about Nicholas' skills in the kitchen and his path in the culinary world that motivated her to move forward and open the new eatery, even during a time of pandemic.

"He said we just needed to take courage and do this, and take charge and it would fall into place and actually everything has been falling into place," Antonia said.

A lease for the space was signed in

"WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT IS A PLACE THAT FEELS WARM AND INVITING, A PLACE WITH GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE, A PLACE PEOPLE WANT TO COME INTO."

NICHOLAS KEENAN

LA TAVOLA CHEF AND CO-OWNER

early November and Antonia reports everything just came together quickly.

The family's concept for La Tavola is based on the original Antonia's that found success in a relatively small storefront on the main street in Braidwood.

It was a place where Antonia's father would greet customers at the door handing out samples and talking to them in his native Italian even though no one really understood what he was saying.

It was within the walls of that first location that Nicholas got his start in food service, and like his brothers—Anthony and Jonathan—he started washing dishes and bussing tables, before getting into the kitchen with his mom.

He was about seven years old when the Braidwood location opened, and as he approaches age 30 he knew he wanted to get back into the business and base it on what made Antonia's successful.

In the midst of a global pandemic when many others would shy away from opening a new business, a restaurant at that, the Keenan's jumped in without hesitation.

"This location came available and it seemed like a good look spot, a good fit, so we went in, looked at it and said yes, and we've pretty much been spending all of our time here," Nicholas said.

While the location may appear larger to those who patronized Antonia's first location, the mother and son say

the new space is actually smaller which is noticeable when you enter the kitchen space, but it's the perfect location for them to get back to their roots.

In developing the concept for La Tavola, the family wanted it to be a place everyone felt comfortable coming into.

"What you can expect is a place that feels warm and inviting, a place with good customer service, a place people want to come into," Nicholas said.

In describing his vision for the business he recalls trips his family has taken to an Italian bakery near Chicago.

"When you walk in its like walking into grandma's house because of the smells and it brings back my childhood and I want that same feeling here," he said.

The Keenans have a lot of great memories from sitting around the dining table, and they want to help their customers build similar memories through food and stories shared around their own tables.

"From our table to yours" is the motto for La Tavola, and they want to help locals fill the table, be it a mid-day meal or a spread to celebrate a special occasion.

La Tavola comes from Nicholas' grandmother.

"She said, 'I had a dream you and your friends were sitting around and talking about how your friendship is like

SEE LA TAVOLA, PAGE 2

Professional insight

GAVC criminal justice students
strike up professional relationships

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

Creativity in teaching has taken on a whole new meaning this year for Grundy Area Vocational Center criminal justice instructor Jeff Hanley who isn't letting the pandemic stand in his way.

When one of the most anticipated projects in his class couldn't proceed as planned, Hanley teamed up with law enforcement colleagues from across the world to provide a new opportunity for his senior students, and they are embracing the change.

As part of their second year of study in the program, students job shadow local law enforcement officers, but the pandemic has put a pause on those opportunities.

"So I was trying to think of a unique way to get them [students] involved with somebody in the field," said Hanley.

He established a mentoring program to fill the void. Each student is paired with at least one professional that matches with their interest in the criminal justice field.

There are patrol officers, detectives, conservation officers, and even an agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigations [FBI] and a SWAT team member. The mentors are based in local police and sheriff's departments, and those as far as New Zealand.

"Our list is pretty extensive," Hanley said.

And, since not everyone in the vocational center's program is looking to enter the law enforcement field, Hanley has paired them up with social workers and counselors.

He's even gone so far as to place students with professionals who followed the same path into their selected field of interest.

Drake, a senior at Coal City High School, is enlisting in the U.S. Air Force and will be in security forces. He is paired with a law enforcement officer who also began his service in the military.

Faith, a fellow Coal City senior, is also looking at military service as a member of the National Guard and she has been paired with an officer who also served in the National Guard.

The students have been communicating with their mentors through e-mail and text message, and a few with phone calls.

The connections began with introductory e-mails that went hand-in-hand with another assignment—the completion of a personal biography that was sent to introduce themselves to mentors.

Hanley was looking for the students to connect two or three times a month to avoid overburdening the mentors and their departments. For some, the interactions are more frequent.

The mentors are sharing details of their path into the field, the duties that perform on a regular basis, unique cases and simply answering the students' questions.

Connor, a senior at Coal City, is planning to enter the law enforcement field with a goal of securing a position with the FBI.

Having reached out to his mentor with a number of questions, the agent he was paired with has since reached out and the two are talking via phone.

The mentoring program is working well for Hanley's students who represent Coal City, Reed-Custer, Wilmington and Gardner-South Wilmington high schools.

However, the instructor said nothing can compare with the job shadowing that allows the students to ride along with an officer.

"This is the best we could do under the circumstances. I think the advantage of this will be on a more personal level because they can get to know who their mentor is and form a relationship," said Hanley. He notes that in the job shadowing program, students often are assigned to different officers so there is no solid connections made.

Students in the class say they wanted the job shadowing experience and hope that before the school year closes they will get a chance to do that ride along.

"It's obviously been kind of rough, because I am really interested in criminal justice and my brother who took this class has remarked how he got to ride along with the police officers. That's kind of tough, but we've been able to work around it in this class pretty well and explore our options and make due with what we can. I think we are still getting a good experience talking to the different officers and agents," Connor said.

Hanley said he feels bad for his senior students in that they have lost out on so many opportunities as a result of the pandemic.

"It's actually worse for these guys this year because they are enduring it for the foreseeable future. I don't think anyone saw it lasting this long," the instructor said.

SEE MENTORS, PAGE 2



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A holiday treat for healthcare workers



Photo by Ann Gill

THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC has affected healthcare workers physically and emotionally and as the virus continues to impact front-line medical personnel, students and staff at Coal City Elementary School are spreading a bit of holiday cheer to with items to pamper medical workers. Last week, at the request of principal Jennifer Kenney [above], the school's second and third grade classes made donations to the effort with second graders bringing in comfy socks and third graders contributing lotion. Student Kylee Looper [pictured] does her part to help. The donations will be packaged later this week by school staff and distributed to local healthcare workers associated with Morris Hospital and Healthcare Centers, Riverside Medical Center and others working in the field.

Holiday closures announced

Coal City Village Hall and the administrative office of the police department will be closed Thursday, Dec. 24 and Friday, Dec. 25 in observance of Christmas, and New Year's Day. Friday, Jan. 1.

Trash service will be delayed one day the weeks of Christmas and New Year for those with a Friday collection. Diamond Village Hall will be closed Thursday, Dec. 24 and Friday, Dec. 25 for the Christmas holiday, and New Years Day, Jan. 1.

The Coal City Public Library will be closed Dec. 24-26 and reopen Monday, Dec. 28. It will then be closed Thursday, Dec. 31 and Friday, Jan. 1.

Students and staff in the Unit 1 School District will conclude the first semester and depart for the winter break at the close of the school day on Tuesday, Dec. 22. The winter break will run Dec. 23 to Jan. 4. Teachers return Jan. 5 and students will be back in class on Jan. 6. The administrative offices of the district will be open during the break with the exception of Dec. 24 and 25 for Christmas and Jan. 1 in observance of the New Year.

With the exception of essential services, all Grundy County offices will be closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

La Tavola

a kitchen table.' We used to joke about that how the four of us were the legs and as friends came in they were the chairs, and the leaves. And, she said that's what we should call it, the table."

They took grandma's advice and are exited to welcome the community to join them at the table—La Tavola.

The menu will include Italian classics like baked mortaccioli, chicken piccata, focaccia bread sandwiches, a variety of sliced meats and cheeses, pastas and specialty condiments available for purchase. The small market they have created within the space features items and brands that can't be found in a regular grocery store.

They also have a wide selection of sweets including cookies, brownies, along with their signature tiramisu and cannoli. There's also coffee cakes and cookie trays and fresh baked bread.

Antonia said the response to the new eatery has been encouraging and they are looking forward to the days and weeks ahead seeing old friends and making new ones.

The deli, bakery and eatery is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday-Saturday and Sundays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., with Monday serving as their day of rest.

Carry-outs, delivery and in-store purchases are avail-

able, with in-door dining to come once current pandemic restrictions are lifted. La Tavola also offers catering.

Along with Nicholas, Antonia will be assisted in the business by sons—Anthony and Jonathan. Her brothers and sister-in-law have also stepped in to help, as well as former employees and friends.

Nicholas has plans to add weekly specials that venture beyond his family's Italian roots. These world flavors will provide something new and different to the area's dining options.

"We're all excited," Antonia said. For her, this new adventure provides much joy as she gets to spend time with her family and she hopes what they are bringing to the community allows others to have that same time together.

"We want everyone to feel as through they are part of our family and in turn we a part of theirs," she said.

If planning to order the signature pizza puff—a fried dough delight filled with your choice of ingredients — Anthony Keenan reminds customers not to over order.

Based on a 12-inch dough, one puff is big enough to feed two or three people. If ordering amaretti cookies, this editor suggests buying them by the dozen, they are that good.

With the eatery officially open, the Keenan's look forward to welcoming the community at La Tavola.

Library offers free E-Book service during pandemic

Everyone in Illinois now has access to thousands of e-books and more, without the need of a library card. Public libraries statewide including the Coal City Public Library District (CCPLD), offer free e-books for the over 12 million Illinois residents and anyone else in the state, through a partnership between the Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) and BiblioLabs. The e-book service, called BiblioBoard, has nearly 40,000 items available at any time to anyone in the state, and the items are always available.

The BiblioBoard service began in 2017 to help libraries offer additional e-resources to their users and to reach the approximately one million Illinois residents that live in areas not served by a public library. The pandemic has increased the demand for e-resources exponentially. Whether or not someone has a library card, people are affected when physical library buildings go through periods of limited or no access due to the pandemic, resulting in a bigger need for easy access to digital materials.

Jolene Franciskovich, CCPLD Library

Director, said, "we believe the library is important to our community and want to be able to serve the public as best we can. Right now the library remains open, however, we know that things are changing on a daily basis with the pandemic. We also realize that some people are not comfortable going into public places but they still want to utilize the services CCPLD has to offer. Therefore, CCPLD continues to offer our library cardholders curbside service and porch drops as well as an opportunity to get a temporary library card from our website to be able to use our digital services."

A report published by RAILS, "The Impact of COVID-19 Related Closures on Library E-Content Usage," shows that library e-book usage almost doubled in April 2020 from the average daily usage in the months prior to the start of the pandemic.

Potential users of BiblioBoard have easy access to available content through a link on CCPLD's website at ccpld.org through its Digital Services or by going to illinois.biblioboard.com. Content includes local community histories, self-

help resources, cookbooks, classics with beautifully reimagined covers, kids' books, community collections by RAILS libraries, books on equity, diversity, and inclusion, graphic novels, and much more.

Illinois libraries are much more than buildings. In addition to BiblioBoard, the library offers digital services such as Hoopla with 20 borrows per month, OverDrive OMNI, Chilton Library, Consumer Reports, CreativeBug, Flipster, and Universal Class to name a few. CCPLD also offers several services such as notary public, voter registration, faxing, and copying. Contact the library to find out more about our specific offerings.

The Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) provides delivery between libraries across a 27,000 square mile area, shared online catalogs, e-book services, continuing education for library staff, and other leadership services and support to academic, public, school, and specialized libraries in northern and western Illinois. More information about RAILS is available at railslibraries.info.

Haas takes legislative oath

KANKAKEE — Helen Wheeler Center CEO Jackie Haas was sworn in as the new 79th District State Representative on Dec. 8.

Haas is succeeding former Rep. Lindsay Parkhurst who is now a Circuit Judge.

Parkhurst served as State Representative since 2017 and did not seek re-election in November. Haas, who succeeds Parkhurst, thanked her for her independent leadership.

"I want to thank the people of the 79th District for entrusting me with the responsibility to be your voice in Springfield," Haas said. "I also want to thank Judge Parkhurst for her example of independent leadership, and her guidance and advice, as I begin my mission to faithfully discharge the duties of this office."

Haas was sworn in by Parkhurst at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Kankakee in front of friends and family.

"We know we face difficult challenges ahead of us as a state, but it is in the face of adversity where Illinoisans thrive," Haas continued. "There are many opportunities moving forward to pursue



Courtesy photo

NEWLY ELECTED 79th District State Representative Jackie Haas was sworn in on Dec. 8 replacing outgoing Representative Lindsay Parkhurst who was appointed a circuit judge on Dec. 7. Parkhurst administered the oath to her successor.

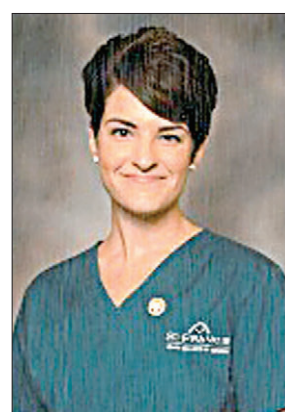
much-needed reforms to our government, sound ethics laws for politicians, and more.

Haas grew up in Mokena where her father still lives. She attended Bishop McNamara High School, obtained her bachelor's and master's degrees in social work, and today serves as the CEO of the non-profit The Helen Wheeler

Center for Community Mental Health.

"I am confident my experiences will provide a unique perspective in the General Assembly to produce common sense, and bi-partisan solutions to the various difficulties facing our great state."

The 79th District includes a portion of Grundy County.



JESSICA WARNING

Nursing graduate

Jessica Warning, the daughter of Michael and Jeanne Warning, of Coal City, graduated with a BSN in nursing from St. Francis University in Joliet on Dec. 12.

The graduate was the recipient of the Cecily and John Leach Scholarship and she was a member of the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International Upsilon Delta Chapter.

Mentors

The students all say they're grateful for the opportunity that has been presented to them.

For Robbie, a senior at Reed-Custer High School who's area of interest is in conservation, he has been able to connect with a conservation officer working in another state, but has local ties. In fact, his mentor's sister is in his GAVC class and he notes it's helped develop a connection.

"I just wanted to turn this over to them to strike up a relationship and build on that. I just wanted them to build relationships, one that can continue past graduation in May and I hope those mentorships continue on to the next phase," Hanley said.

The students say they are enjoying the mentor program and have learned so much about the field from their studies in Hanley's course.

Justin and Kaden, seniors at Wilmington High School, say they will both be pursuing careers in the criminal just field. One will get his start through military service and the other is heading to college.

Hanley tells his students there are two paths into the field—college and military. The path one chooses is a personal



Photo by Ann Gill

SECOND YEAR STUDENTS in Jeff Hanley's criminal justice course are currently working with mentors from across the world. Each student is paired with an individual who provides insight into the various aspects of the criminal justice field. The students in the course are seniors enrolled at Coal City, Reed-Custer, Wilmington and Gardner-South Wilmington high schools.

preference, with the majority of his current class of second year students heading toward college.

High school students with an interest in criminal justice are encouraged to

check out the GAVC program through its virtual classroom tour that can be accessed through the GAVC Criminal Justice Facebook page.

Levy

2.01789 per \$100,000 of assessed valuation, down from 2.0526.

"For a house valued at \$150,000 this reflects a savings of approximately \$14.24, which is an increase from the preliminary levy that represented a savings of \$10," Fritz said, noting that without the increasing debt schedule, this savings would have been \$86.15.

Following adoption of the 2020 levy, village trustees approved leaving \$151,474.17 against Special Service Area #2 per the terms of a development agreement the village entered into with Inland Logistics Port and Reed & Broadway, LLC.

In 2013, the village agreed to front the \$1.9 million necessary to construct a lead track from the nearby Union Pacific rail line into the proposed development located on the southwest corner of Broadway and Reed Road.

Fritz reports that according to the agreement, the initial debt payments that were provided by the village for interest payments in the first few years of the bonds are

to be collected in the final three years of bond payments and the first year for this payment occurs in 2021.

This year's total [SSA] levy reflects the bond payment of \$34,807.50 plus one-third of the total portion spent to date by the village. The two

remaining years of debt payments are scheduled in 2021 at \$384,807.50 and 2022 at \$433,882.50, according to the administrator.

Payment of that debt is made solely by that specific property's recorded land owners, and thus the village board

further approved an ordinance abating the collection of those taxes from municipal taxpayers.

By state statute the approved levies must be filed with the county clerk on or before the last Tuesday in December.

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher
Ann Gill, editor

Input sought on search for new school superintendent

The Unit 1 Board of Education has started discussion on choosing a new superintendent to replace Dr. Kent Bugg upon his retirement effective July 1, 2022. The selection of a new superintendent is probably the most important decision a board of education has to make. Therefore, the Board has hired the Illinois Association of School Boards [IASB] to assist in this process.

The Board of Education is seeking as much input as possible during this process and requests that all board members, staff, parents and community members complete an online survey provided by the IASB. The results will be tallied by the IASB and used by the Board and screening team to assist in the decision-making process.

The survey can be accessed at: www.surveymonkey.com/r/W3YZJ7G Deadline to participate in the survey is Sunday, Jan. 3, at 11:45 p.m.

COVID-19 vaccine arrives in Illinois

STAFF REPORT

Over the past nine months over 3,400 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Grundy County. Now there is hope as a vaccine arrives in Illinois but Grundy County will have to wait.

Grundy is not among the first counties to receive the vaccine, and at this time it is not yet aware when it will receive the vaccine or the quantity.

When the vaccine is received here, Grundy County Public Health Administrator Michelle Prium said the public will be notified and the method by which residents can receive it.

“Grundy County Health Department intends to adhere to the vaccine allocation metric as released by IDPH, which includes guidance for which groups of persons, are initially eligible for the vaccine,” Prium said.

The first coronavirus case reported by the Grundy County Health Department was March 23. By the end of the month there were 14 confirmed cases. The number of positive cases increased in the following months until there was a drop in September. In October the case count jumped 166% and reached a monthly high in November at 470-plus cases.

On Monday, the Illinois Department of Public Health [IDPH] disclosed a total of 3,436 cases in Grundy County since March, 266 of

those positive tests reported between Monday, Dec. 7 and Friday, Dec. 11. Statewide there were over 61,000 new cases announced between Dec. 7-14.

The Grundy County Health Department noted in its weekly COVID-19 update it is following 503 people who recently tested positive and were in isolation.

IDPH noted the death of seven residents due to complications related to COVID-19—two males in their 60s, two females in their 70s and two females and one male in their 80s.

Grundy County remains on the state's COVID-19 warning list for a seventh consecutive week as it hit warning levels in four of eight metrics used to determine increased virus activity for the period of Nov. 29 to Dec. 5. Warning levels were reached in the number of new cases per 100,000 population, tests performed, percentage of intensive care unit availability and test positivity at 21.4%. As of Monday, the seven day rolling test positivity rate had dipped to 18.4%.

The first 43,000 doses of the newly approved vaccine arrived in Illinois Monday and were sent to the state's Strategic National Stockpile for distribution to 10 hospitals that will serve as regional distribution centers. The state is set to receive about 109,000 doses this week that will be distributed to the 50 counties with the highest death rate per capita.

“Today marks a momentous occasion—

not just this year, but in American history,” Gov. JB Pritzker said in statement. “Eleven months after scientists the world over first got their hands on the genetic sequence of this virus—and we are seeing the beginning of the end of this pandemic.”

At this time, state and local officials continue to remind residents to practice the three W's—watch your distance, wash your hands and wear a mask. Additionally, officials continue to encourage individuals to remain home when possible and consider virtual holiday celebrations with those you don't share a household with.

Testing is available throughout the county at local hospital systems, and protocol at each location is based on availability of resources. Mobile testing units organized by the IDPH are also available throughout the region and include daily testing at Mission Boulevard Soccer Complex, 640 Mission Blvd, Joliet between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Testing is also available between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 20 at Saratoga Elementary School, 4040 N. Division St., Morris.

IDPH testing is provided at no cost to anyone regardless of symptoms and results are available in 4-7 days from specimen collection.

Capitol News Illinois contributed to this report.

Unit 1 Schools honor Students of the Week



GRACE SITAR
Intermediate School



LINDEN GREENAN
Intermediate School



KYPTYN DEARTH
Intermediate School



ANGELISE STEVENS
Intermediate School



BRODY D'ORAZIO
Middle School



ANASTASIA PAPACH
Middle School



KAMRYN HANSEN
Middle School



LEXIS OLIPHANT
Middle School



ABBE MILLS
Elementary School



TYLER LOHNSTEIN
Elementary School



LEAH ALDRIDGE
Elementary School



AIDEN RODRIGUEZ
Elementary School



KEEGAN KERR
Elementary School



EASTON HORATH
Elementary School



EVAN KOZLOWSKI
Elementary School



JOHN VIANO
Elementary School



ROLAND NOVAK
Elementary School



DAKOTA TEMPLET
Early Childhood Center



BRADY LOUGHRAN
Early Childhood Center



LILLIANA BEACH
Early Childhood Center



ZACHARY MLYNIEC
Elementary School



DRAKE AICHELE
Elementary School



JORDYN OWEN
Elementary School



AMELIA HICKS
Elementary School



VICTORIA GERGITS
Early Childhood Center



SOPHIE ARTEAGA
Early Childhood Center



KIRA BERLANGA
Early Childhood Center



BRYSEN NICHOLS
Early Childhood Center



ATTICUS KEE
Early Childhood Center



EVIE LARDI
Early Childhood Center



TEMPI KUHEL
Early Childhood Center



BRANTLEE SHOUSE
Early Childhood Center



ALEXANDRA JESCHKE
Early Childhood Center



COLIN MUHLENBRUCH
Early Childhood Center

Grundy County to hold Annual Assessors meeting

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 35 ILCS 200/9-15 of the Illinois Property Tax Code, notice is hereby given that the 2021 Supervisor of Assessments Annual meeting for all Township and Multi-Township Assessors, and Deputy Assessors, in Grundy County has been scheduled for Friday, December 18, 2020 at 4:00pm at the Grundy County Administrative Building, County Board Room, 1320 Union Street, Morris, IL. The purpose of this meeting is for consultation and instruction to ensure uniformity of the Township Assessor's functions. This meeting is open to the public.

This is the same verbiage (updated for this year) that was published last year in the Courant on December 11. Please let me know when you are able to publish this notice.

Thank you,
Deborah Ritke, CCAO, CIAO
Grundy County Supervisor of Assessments
111 E. Washington St.
Morris IL 60450
email: dritke@grundycy.org
815-941-3269
Fax: 815-941-2126

Published in the Coal City Courant on Dec. 16, 2020.

Express Signs files for permit to place new sign

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 4th day of January, 2021 at 7 o'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 new street sign with an electronic message center to better communicate with the community and utilize technology with the ability to alert community of weather and other emergency alerts.

At the following address: 100 S. Broadway
Legal description of property: Buchanan's add lots 4, 5 and 8, Blk 1, Section 3-32-8

Request for the above appeal was applied for by: Express Signs.
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 many appear in person or by agent.
Dated this 30th day of November, 2020.

Published in the Coal City Courant on Dec. 16, 2020.

Foreclosure sale of 1305 Clifton Drive

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
GRUNDY COUNTY - MORRIS, ILLINOIS

US BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION AS TRUSTEE FOR AEGIS ASSET BACKED SECURITIES TRUST MORTGAGE PASS THROUGH CERTIFICATES SERIES 2005-4; Plaintiff, vs. DEBBIE MILLER; LAKEWOOD TRAILS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION; ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE; MORTGAGE ELECTRONIC REGISTRATION SYSTEMS, INC UNITED STATES OF AMERICA; UNKNOWN SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE OF THE JOHN C. MILLER REVOCABLE TRUST DATED MARCH 6, 2012; JOHN C. MILLER REVOCABLE TRUST DATED MARCH 6, 2012; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NONRECORD CLAIMANTS; Defendants, 19 CH 19

NOTICE OF SALE

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure entered in the above entitled cause Intercounty Judicial Sales Corporation will on Wednesday, January 6, 2021, at the hour of 2:00 p.m. in the office of Donald F. Black, 201 Liberty Street, Suite 211, Morris, Illinois 60450, sell to the highest bidder for cash, the following described mortgaged real estate:

LOT 446 IN LAKEWOOD TRAILS UNIT 2A BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PART OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF SECTION 14, AND PART OF THE NORTH HALF OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 14, ALL IN TOWNSHIP 34 NORTH, RANGE 8 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED JULY 19, 2004 AS DOCUMENT NUMBER 436615, IN AUX SABLE TOWNSHIP, GRUNDY COUNTY, ILLINOIS.
P.I.N. 03-14-202-003.

Commonly known as 1305 Clifton Drive, Minooka, IL 60447.

The improvement on the property consists of a single family residence. If the subject mortgaged real estate is a unit of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Condominium Property Act.

Sale terms: 10% down by certified funds, balance within 24 hours, by certified funds. No refunds. The property will NOT be open for inspection.

For information call Law Clerk at Plaintiff's Attorney, The Wirbicki Law Group, 33 West Monroe Street, Chicago, Illinois 60603. (312) 360-9455.

INTERCOUNTY JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION
intercountyjudicialsales.com
13160547

Published in the Coal City Courant on Wednesday, Dec. 2, 9 and 16, 2020.

Attorney Black files Lutz estate claim notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
GRUNDY COUNTY - IN PROBATE
No. 2020 P 109

In the Matter of the Estate of Jacquelyn J. Lutz, Deceased

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given to creditors of the death of Jacquelyn J. Lutz. Letters of office as Independent Co-Executors were issued to Stephen Lutz, 1150 Patterson Dr., Morris, IL 60450 and Michael Lutz, 395 Twilight Dr., Morris, IL 60450, whose attorney is FRANK J. BLACK, BLACK & BLACK, 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.

STEPHEN LUTZ
MICHAEL LUTZ
INDEPENDENT CO-EXECUTORS
Frank J. 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 Dec. 9, 16 and 23, 2020.

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The Free Press Newspapers reserves the right to edit remarks for taste, length, personal attacks, calls for boycotts and libel. In cases where the publisher selects not to publish these remarks the news-

paper makes every effort to forward unpublished comments to the parties to whom they are directed.

The comments stated are the opinions and ideas of the callers and not that of the newspaper. Information may not constitute the actual events or facts of a particular topic.

To voice your opinion, please go to

www.freepressnewspapers.com, -> Submit Sound-off or call 815-634-0317. Please state the town in which you are calling from or in regards to. If mailing comments please direct them to Sound-Off, 271 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL 60416 or 111 S. Water St., Wilmington, IL 60481.

Double standard

BRAIDWOOD—During the December 8th meeting of the Braidwood City Council a resident spoke up in regards to his dissatisfaction of the Mayor and his performance. The comments resulted in a heated back and forth exchange of words between the resident and the Mayor at which time the Mayor banged his gavel to restore order and enforce the 3 minute time limit allowed during public comment. What's funny is that when another outspoken critic of two other city council members went on the attack of these commissioners over several meetings, not once did he try to restore order, enforce the time limit or bang his gavel. It's nice to see that our Mayor has an obvious double standard.

Blocked by ILGOP

WESLEY TWP— After constantly hearing how social media has been blocking conservative voices, I felt that it was important to illustrate the conservative hypocrisy behind free speech. After asking several folks on The ILGOP Forum, the official page of the Illinois Republican Party has blocked me from asking questions in response to their search for a new ILGOP leader now that Schneider has stepped down. As of now, my comments are still there for everyone to see - they do not violate their published guidelines, there was no personal attacks, just basic questions of what are the GOP's Plans for the future of our state. If the ILGOP is going to block inquiries regarding their plans for our future of IL, is it safe to assume that they have no plans?

Still waiting

WILMINGTON—Do children not say thank you anymore? The times, they are a changing. I did when I was growing up under my parents' roof after receiving gifts for birthdays, graduations etc. Still haven't heard anything from nieces that got gifts this year. There is another old saying from the past, "Wait till next year." Uncle Frank

Follow procedure

BRAIDWOOD—A Braidwood resident recently questioned a Commissioner during a public meeting if he had received the FOIA requests that she had sent directly to him via email and asked why he had not fulfilled them yet. Why on earth would anyone submit a FOIA request to the incorrect person and expect them to complete it? Everyone knows that the City Clerk is the designated FOIA officer for the city and that all FOIA requests get submitted to her. As someone who has submitted multiple FOIA requests in the past, you would think that they would be well aware of the correct procedure. Sounds like a fishy setup to me and a poor excuse to create something to complain about.

It's their right

WILMINGTON—If anyone hasn't noticed there are some people who won't shut down some restaurants and bars since they can't afford to stay shut down. Some politicians are having them arrested. But what people really don't understand is that these small business owners have become political prisoners because they are standing up against some politicians who have overstepped their authority by allowing big business to operate freely and not allowing small businesses from operating so they can gain control over the lives of the Americans. Welcome to Communism part

one.

What's coming next?

COAL CITY—We happen to have some schools throughout the U.S. that decided to stop children from reading certain books like "To Kill a Mockingbird" and "Of Mice and Men." This is just one more form of control of the lives of citizens. Next will be "Fahrenheit 451" which is a movie about burning books, the temperature of which paper burns. And to go back prior to World War II when the dictator of Germany banned books, controlled the news and arrested people who objected to any of these things and even indoctrinated children to think only one way. They also removed radios and weapons from all the citizens and today some of these same things are happening in America by the Democratic party which is party of the left and so is Communism the party of the left.

Voter fraud

Vote early, vote often! Living in the Chicagoland area, we have all heard that saying. Finding out it may be true, is disheartening. Every legally registered voter should be angry at the possibility that there may have been widespread voter fraud in our elections. Nationwide, no matter what politician you choose, you should feel confident that your vote will not be nullified by an illegal ballot. Before we call Biden our president, everyone should want to make sure he won by an election that was fair and legal. Without legal elections, our democracy will be destroyed. We need to demand voter reform and require ID's to vote! Andrea Grant

One great, other not

WILMINGTON—The greatest and most humble Republican President of the United States was Abraham Lincoln who ended the Civil War. The worst and most arrogant Republican President of the United States is Donald Trump who wants to start a Civil War!

At warp speed

SHADOW LAKES—Next week the virus vaccine comes out thanks to Donald Trump's Warp Speed. If Joe Biden had been president he would have been more worried about the race and gender of the makers.

Attendance is important

REED TOWNSHIP—The Reed Township Republic Caucus has put together a slate of candidates for the April election but how many of them have ever attended a single township meeting? You would think that in order to know what's going on or what you're going to be changing as stated publicly on social media, you would have been attending these meetings all along. Attending a city council meeting is entirely different than attending a township meeting and the way the two bodies of government operate is completely different. So don't think you're going to run it like a municipal form of government, because you can't.

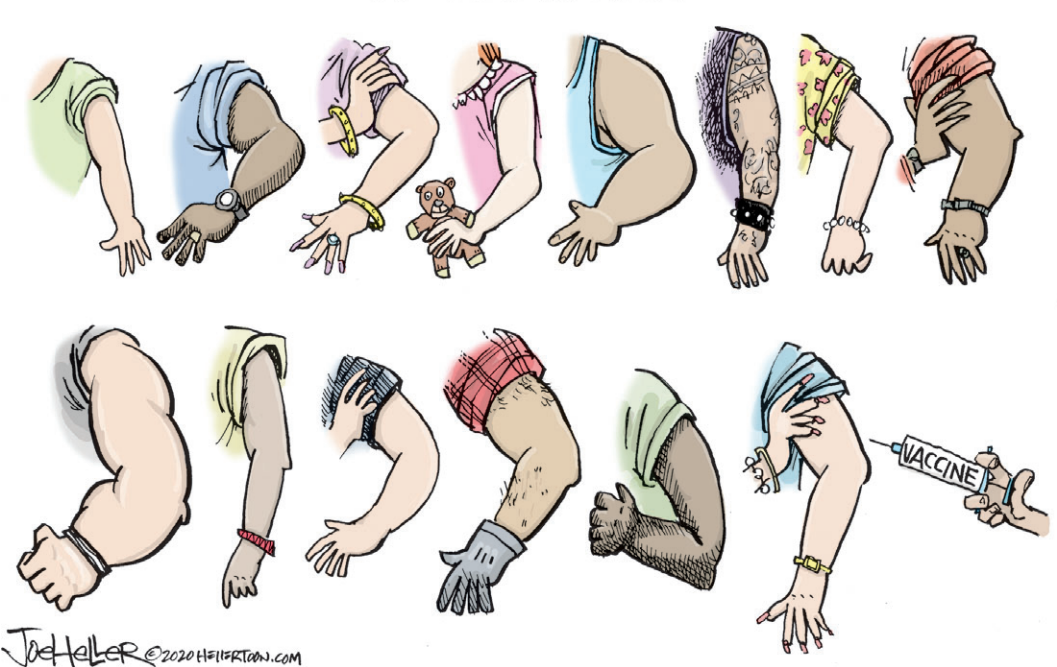
Will never forget

COAL CITY—I still miss the big beautiful white house on Broadway with the white Christmas tree in the window. Thanks Lindy, it was suppose to be the Lindy house but it burnt down instead. What a beautiful house.

Tornado tax

COAL CITY—In regards to the Coal City tornado tax. Maybe the village would have

A CALL TO ARMS



more money to go to that if the people that we have trusted to our money would quit spending it as if the money were coming out of their own pocket. Spend it more carefully.

Manipulating America

SHADOW LAKES—For years there's been the opinion that all Americans had some form of basic intelligence. But after seeing all the people that want Communism to control their lives, there is now the belief that U.S. citizens do not even have the intelligence to understand that they have been played like balloons filled with hot air. They are being manipulated like puppets on a string by people who only want to control their lives and do not care if they live as long as the millionaires and the career politicians are able to take all the money from them and destroy our country. Understand that right now there are two political parties, the Republican party and the party of crime and corruption with dictatorship policies known as the Democratic party.

Life lesson response

WILMINGTON—I was driving through town when my young son asked "Daddy, what does Pritzker sucks mean?" I told him it means a sad, angry, possible violent person lives there and to be safe avoid any house that has that sign. And that goes double for confederate flags.

Call and complain

SHADOW LAKES—Do you want service? There sure doesn't seem to be too much service at US Bank. First, we close the branch, next we cut personnel and last they went paperless. Everything they have done is for the benefit of them and not the customer. With the paperless deposit, if you don't have a cell-phone you must print your own deposit slips. The only thing I can recommend to the patrons of the bank is to call corporate in Minnesota and complain. I could walk to the branch before, now I must drive five miles. Margot Lane

Mayhem in America

COAL CITY—Armed protesters recently threatened Michigan's Secretary of State and her young child outside their home and the children of a health official in Idaho were likewise endangered by mobs. A month ago 13 conspirators plotted to kidnap and kill the Michigan governor and Wichita's mayor was nearly kidnapped for enforcing masks. In May the state of Michigan shut down its state capitol because men with rifles threatened the legislative body. Yes, right-wingers are jeopardizing American streets as Trump overturns our democracy. Instead of challenging the tweeter-in-chief, the Republican Party allows law-and-order to be abandoned. Sasha M.

Works both ways

SHADOW LAKES— To Ralph D: Just read your commentary, and for a second, I thought you were talking about the Biden family, Always, Margot Lane

License to kill

WILMINGTON—Small businesses and millions of unemployed Americans are hanging by their fingernails trying to survive the pandemic. But Republicans don't care and refuse to budge on relief legislation to help mom and pop companies. Not only that, Senate Leader McConnell is pushing legislation to allow billion dollar corporations to abuse their workers. McConnell insists that fat cats should be able to deny employees protective equipment and safety practices and legally get away with it. McConnell is truly living up to his nickname, the Grim Reaper. How much more abuse must Americans take from the GOP? Kate L.

Few are listening

BRAIDWOOD—Braidwood's self proclaimed truth seeking FOIA vigilante is costing the taxpayers quite a bit of money. Why doesn't the city administrator tell the public just how much time and money it is costing the taxpayers for this cheerleader's pursuit of information. This person is all about trying to dig up the truth with their FOIA shovel and then flaunting their findings about like they just did the residents a favor and found the lost city of Atlantis. Their intentions might be somewhat

Wilmington Chamber discounts membership

The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce is offering a \$25 discount off memberships before Dec. 31.

The incentive lowers the cost of membership to \$100 for the year 2021 as long as payment is postmarked by Dec. 31.

The Wilmington Chamber currently includes over 90 businesses who benefit from

the Chamber gift certificate program, business networking, promoting Wilmington with its web page and social media, the representative voice for small business when it comes to local, county and state government and more.

Among the accomplishments for 2020 the Chamber started a Hometown Heroes program - had 28 banners

installed through town; started a tourism & beautification program; raised funds for the Christian Help Association; launched a campaign to bring benches and flower pots to the downtown district and more.

For more information and to complete a chamber application to join visit www.wilmingtonchamber.org or call 815-476-5991.

positive, but their methods are very skewed which is causing the exact opposite reaction from residents than they are seeking. Braidwood residents are smart enough to know the truth about what's going on up in city hall without it being shoved in front of their faces and forced to eat it. Keep on shaking those pom-poms because the fans in the stands are becoming fewer and fewer.

A thousand cuts

WILMINGTON—After shredding our democracy by a thousand cuts, President Trump launched a coup to overturn our election. Although the coup seems to be failing, Trump continues to assault our republic by reducing our nation to a third world country by trying to strike down millions of votes and by sending his thugs into the streets to threaten the people's safety. Remember when Trump ridiculed 'blankety-blank' countries? The irony is overwhelming because that's what we've become. Moreover China, wisely investing billions in those primitive African countries which Trump despises, is playing the long game and may soon have us under its thumb just as Russia does already. We cannot afford another four years of Trump's short-sighted foreign policies let alone his devaluation of our representative institutions. Irene D

Thanks Donald Trump

SHADOW LAKES—Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Donald J. Trump, for your actions with the vaccine with operation Warp Speed. Thank you for your efforts, getting this developed, and to the people of this country. My voice might be the only voice saying thank you. You sure will not hear this on social media, nor from Hollywood, nor the left who is waiting to run our country. Very shortly you will see China Joe, on the news saying, "look what I have done." He will never be my president. Always, Margot Lane

How can this be?

SHADOW LAKES—This is directed at Gary Weidner who I believe was a professor probably educated to communism to teach young people and also directed at Ryan Lewis, my neighbor. It's interesting how there seems to be no coronavirus surges in areas that had thousands of protesters for months. How is that possible? Is this immunity through ideology? Weidner has never answered any of my questions. I think they are too difficult, the same thing with my neighbor. Dan Hill

CNN knows better

SHADOW LAKES—There's no integrity any more. CNN should lose their broadcasting license for saying the Hunter Biden story was just Russian disinformation when they knew otherwise. We are now just like a communist country where you cannot believe the media any more.

Control freaks

SHADOW LAKES—They shut my neighbor's water off. He is out of work, his wife is expecting and they have one child. So we ran a garden hose from our house to theirs and someone came knocking at our door and said if we don't shut that water off running to our neighbors they will shut our water off. Can they really do that to us?

USA deathwish

COAL CITY—Many people that believe Joe Biden will be a great president and that he will do everything that his office could perform, I do agree that he will be a great president but only for China and all the foreign countries. He will do everything he can to aid foreign countries to destroy the USA and the laws of the American citizens. Since he has already stated he is going to use presidential orders to abolish the rights for every American citizen which includes every Democrat in the USA, unless you are a government employee. It has already been stated that the people in congress under his rule will give themselves raises in salaries. Just look at all the shut downs in the USA and how the Democratic leaders are treating the American citizens which is a small portion of what could happen with Joe Biden as president. Good luck trying to survive.



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Beautification Program

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December 21**

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Happy New Year*

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Chamber of Commerce**

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FAMILY



Bruce and Deanna (Dede) Trotter

Trotters to celebrate 50th Anniversary

Bruce and Deanna (Dede) Trotter will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 18, 2020. Bruce and the former Dede Savage were married on Dec. 18, 1970 at Hope Presbyterian Church in Gardner. The couple has one son, Michael (Cathy) and two granddaughters, Morgan and Lauryn.

ALDI joins Illinois grocers now accepting SNAP buying online

Illinois residents have a new retail option for using Electronic Benefit Transfer and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (EBT SNAP) online through Instacart.

The Illinois Department of Human Services announced Monday that ALDI will accept EBT SNAP via Instacart, allowing recipients access to more fresh foods with same-day delivery and pick-up services.

"The health and wellness of Illinois families is a top priority of my administration and I am pleased to announce this partnership which offers increased options for SNAP recipients to acquire groceries via online pickup or delivery," said Governor JB Pritzker.

"Especially amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important that all Illinois families have access to healthy, nutritious options, regardless of their background."

As part of this new program, EBT SNAP participants will be able to shop from ALDI via the Instacart online site and mobile app. To begin, eligible SNAP customers can visit www.DHS.Illinois.gov/OnlineSNAP.

Once an Instacart customer profile is created, customers can enter their EBT food card information as a form of payment in their profile. Customers will need a secondary form of payment for non-food items such as taxes, tips, and fees for delivery, per federal guidelines.

Customers can shop and select items from ALDI's EBT SNAP-eligible products. After filling their online shopping carts, customers can choose grocery delivery or pickup for their order and determine how much of their SNAP benefit they would like to allocate to the order.

Illinois' initial Online SNAP EBT option launched in June 2020 including Amazon and Walmart. The Illinois Department of Human Services will continue working to encourage even more Illinois retailers to participate.

Currently, any SNAP-Authorized Retailer can allow for customers to complete orders online and pay at the store when they pick up. The Online EBT capability allows the customer to complete the entire transaction online and avoid completing the purchase at the retailer location.

Coloring contest underway for those ages 3-6

Wilmington VFW Post 5422 Auxiliary is sponsoring a patriotic coloring contest for boys and girls ages 3 through 6.

Entry forms to be colored by youngsters from Wilmington and Braidwood can be picked up at the VFW, 557 W. Baltimore St., Wilmington.

Winners of the local contest will be entered into a District competition. The name, age and address of child must be written on the back of each entry.

Deadline to enter is Jan. 15, 2021. For more details call Kathy at 815-823-4324 or 815-926-2651.



Volunteers needed to lay wreaths at veterans cemetery

The laying of wreaths at the markers of U.S. soldiers will take place Saturday, Dec. 19 at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood.

Volunteers of all ages are needed to place wreaths following a brief ceremony at 11 a.m. Volunteers should dress for the cold and show up.

New jobless claims surge in Illinois

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — More than 107,000 Illinois workers filed first-time unemployment claims last week, a 45% increase over the week before as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to wreak havoc on the state and national economies.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security reported that there were 107,616 new claims filed during the week that ended Saturday, Dec. 5, up from 75,536 the previous week. That compares to 14,798 initial claims filed during the same period last year.

That increase was part of a nationwide trend as the entire country has experienced record numbers of new cases and hospitalizations due to the pandemic. But the increase in new jobless claims in Illinois was sharper than it was nationally.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, new unemployment claims nationwide rose 32% over the prior week, to 947,504.

The number of people receiving continuing unemployment benefits has also

risen. In Illinois, that number went up 14.5%, to 340,919, while nationally it rose 10%, to just under 5.8 million.

During his daily COVID-19 briefing on Thursday, Dec. 10, Gov. JB Pritzker declined to say whether the state's increase was due in any part to the stricter Tier 3 mitigations that went into effect Nov. 20. Those include closing bars and restaurants to indoor service, closing casinos, video gaming facilities, theaters and indoor recreation centers, and limiting the size of both indoor and outdoor public gatherings.

941-HELP filling Crisis Line gap

With the closing of Crisis Line of Will & Grundy counties, the Community Foundation of Grundy County has edited 941-HELP (4357).

"The phone line for 941-HELP used to ring at Crisis Line during evenings and weekends. We have edited it to instead answer with a greeting where the caller can choose to be transferred immediately to the National Suicide Hotline," reported Julie Buck, executive director of the Community Foundation of Grundy County.

In addition to the option to transfer to the National Suicide Hotline, callers needing assistance with groceries, rent, utilities and other resources can "Press 2" to leave a voicemail for staff, who will return the call during the next business day.

For those wanting to browse all of the services available throughout Grundy County, residents can use their computers, tablets, or smartphones to research services at 815941HELP.com.

"815941HELP.com was created over 15

years ago through the Foundation's Workforce Development Committee of our Communityworks project. At the time, the Committee felt that Grundy County doesn't have enough resources. Come to find out, Grundy has resources, but residents didn't know how to find them when they need them," explained Buck. "The resulting 941-HELP project started with card racks and kiosks, in addition to the phone and website, but with evolving technology and the popularity of smartphones and tablets, the card racks and kiosks faded away. Now everyone can look for resources 24/7 either by phoning 815-941-4357 (HELP) or by scrolling through 815941help.com."

If your nonprofit or government agency services are not listed on 815941HELP.com, please add a new listing by clicking the green button at the bottom of the 815941HELP.com page. Service providers can also call or e-mail the Community Foundation of Grundy County at 941-0852 or julie@cfgrundycounty.com

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Brent VanDuyne
PharmD
pharmacist/owner

Jenny Urban
CPHT

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Democrats vote to end investigation of Madigan

Committee adjourns
after 3 meetings
in 4 months

BY SARAH MANSUR
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — After just three hearings in four months, Democrats on the special committee probing House Speaker Michael Madigan's alleged misconduct and role in a bribery scheme involving Commonwealth Edison voted Monday to end their investigation.

Throughout the combative three-hour hearing, the three House Republicans and three Democrats clashed repeatedly over the rules of procedure, disagreed about the facts contained in the federal court documents and levied accusations of political stunts and a “kangaroo court.”

The House Democratic members — Representatives Chris Welch, of Hillside, Natalie Manley, of Joliet, and Elizabeth Hernandez, of Cicero — voted no on a motion, presented by Manley, that Madigan engaged in conduct unbecoming of legislator.

With a deadlocked vote along party lines, the motion failed to pass.

Madigan issued a statement on Monday that criticized his Republican counterpart, Minority Leader Representative Jim Durkin of Western Springs, who filed the petition creating the committee.

“Jim Durkin insisted on initiating this political theater, and through this process we’ve come to learn that he was involved in the very conduct he claims to be so offended by — recommending people for various jobs.

If Jim Durkin actually believes it is conduct unbecoming of a legislator to recommend people for jobs or help constituents, he might want to review his own hypocritical behavior. Rather than finger pointing, I suggest we focus on the important work that lies ahead of us,” Madigan said in the statement.

The Special Investigating Committee was formed in late August after the U.S. Attorney's Office in Chicago charged ComEd in a deferred prosecution agreement that alleged ComEd officials conspired with Madigan's associates to secure no-work jobs and contracts for Madigan's friends in exchange for favorable legislation in the Illinois General Assembly.

The committee was tasked with investigating whether there was evidence to find Madigan's conduct was unbecoming of a legislator and whether Madigan should face disciplinary proceedings.

Under the deferred prosecution agreement, ComEd admitted to the bribery scheme and agreed to pay a \$200 million and cooperate with the investigation.

Madigan has not been charged with a crime and he denies wrongdoing. He is mentioned in the deferred prosecution agreement and indictments as “Public Official A.”

In September, a former ComEd executive, Fidel Marquez, pleaded guilty to a role in the bribery scheme. Last month, federal prosecutors in Chicago indicted four others — Michael McClain, a former ComEd lobbyist and close Madigan confidant, former ComEd CEO Anne Pramaggiore, former ComEd executive John Hooker, and Jay Doherty, a lobbyist who worked on contract for

ComEd — with bribery for allegedly conspiring to influence Madigan with no-work jobs and contracts to his associates.

Last month, Welch released hundreds of pages of documents that the committee had requested from ComEd, including numerous emails between McClain and Marquez, Pramaggiore and others seeking favors for Madigan's associates and individuals from his district.

The Republicans on the investigating committee — Representatives Tom Demmer, of Dixon, Deanne Mazzochi, of Elmhurst, and Grant Werhli, of Naperville — extensively referenced the emails to show McClain was working on behalf of Madigan, and with Madigan's knowledge, to secure jobs, contracts and internships that were meant to curry favor with the Speaker.

“This was not a mere job recommendation, this was a demand,” Mazzochi said in reference to an email from McClain instructing ComEd officials to add former CEO of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority Juan Ochoa to the ComEd Board of Directors at the request of Madigan.

Other emails show McClain asking the company to provide work for attorney Victor Reyes and his law firm, Reyes Kurson, again at the request of Madigan, who is referred to as “our Friend.”

In one email, McClain wrote, “I am sure you know how valuable [Reyes] is to our Friend,” and then went on to write, “I know the drill and so do you. If you do not get involve [sic] and resolve this issue of 850 hours for his law firm per year then he will go to our Friend. Our Friend will call me and then I will call you. Is this

a drill we must go through?”

Mazzochi said the exchange was “not a job recommendation. That is an unethical quid pro quo.”

“These internal documents certainly confirm that there is no innocent explanation,” she said.

The three Republican House members of the committee called for additional witnesses to appear before them, including those named in the federal indictment, but a motion to issue subpoenas failed to pass, with a partisan vote deadlocked at 3-3.

In a news conference after the committee adjourned, Demmer said the Democrats on the House committee shut down their investigation.

“It was our duty to conduct this investigation to support and try to rebuild the integrity and trust of the House of Representatives. But what we saw under the leadership of Chairman Welch was a process that sought not to hear from additional witnesses, sought not to have adequate number of hearings and sought to bring the committee to a conclusion before we had the information necessary to make a qualified judgment,” Demmer said.

The committee met twice in September, and has heard testimony from only one witness, David Glockner, the executive vice president of compliance and audit for Exelon Corporation, which is the parent company of ComEd.

Democrats on the committee also used the emails to suggest Durkin improperly sought ComEd jobs for his friends, citing an email from a lobbyist for the Illinois State Medical Society that asked McClain to consider recommending a woman who had been working in Durkin's office.

Hernandez, along with her Democratic colleagues, maintained that McClain's emails simply showed someone making job recommendations.

“Recommending jobs is legal, and Leader Durkin asked for job recommendations too,” she said. “In neither case is this illegal or unethical.”

Furthermore, Democrats claimed that the committee's motive was a power grab by Durkin in an effort to become the next House Speaker, even though he would need the votes of at least 15 House Democrats to be elected to the position.

“This is a political show that was concocted by Minority Leader Durkin. It was a plain power grab by the minority party, as the Republican members of this committee and petitioner have shown in spite of our attempts to conduct this investigation in a nonpartisan impartial manner,” Welch said during a news conference following the committee's adjournment.

In his own statement Monday, Durkin criticized the Democratic members of the committee for protecting Madigan.

“The Democratic Party shows again today there is no limit to the lengths they will go to protect Speaker Madigan. Chairman Welch, Representative Hernandez and Representative Manley have turned the rule of law on its head by refusing to investigate the charges and demand the testimony of Speaker Madigan in this scandal. I call on Governor Pritzker to finally demand Speaker Madigan resign as it is clear he refuses to answer any questions about his corrupt practices,” the statement reads.

Renewed calls for gun license reforms amid delays

ISP has seen 167%
rise in new FOID
applications this year

BY SARAH MANSUR
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — Four GOP state House lawmakers on Wednesday, Dec. 9 voiced complaints from their central and southern Illinois constituents who say they have waited months after applying for new or renewed gun ownership licenses without an update from the Illinois State Police amid an unprecedented volume of applications this year.

Representatives Avery Bourne, R-Morrisonville, CD Davidsmeyer, R-Jacksonville, Patrick Windhorst, R-Metropolis and Mike Marron, R-Fithian, repeated their criticisms of the Firearm Ownership Identification card and concealed carry license systems during a virtual news conference.

The group discussed reforms they have suggested in the past which have stalled in the General Assembly.

Bourne said FOID and concealed carry issues and delays have been the top complaint from her constituents, eclipsed only by issues related to unemployment.

“There is no way around it. These people are experiencing lengthy and unreasonable delays, which is an infringement on their constitutional rights,” Bourne said.

According to ISP, the current average processing time for new FOID applications is 121 days. For new CCL appli-

cations, the average processing time is 145 days.

ISP, in a release issued Dec. 8, stated the processing times “are unacceptable.”

“Our people believe in building a system that makes it hard for the bad guys and simple and safe for the good guys. The Illinois State Police will keep pushing hard, but frankly we will need authority from the legislature to untangle, streamline and integrate the aging patchwork of FOID, concealed carry, firearms transactions, and records checks if we are going to fulfill this mission,” ISP Director Brendan Kelly said.

The Illinois State Police Firearms Services Bureau is responsible for issuing FOID cards and concealed carry licenses. Under state law, “no person may acquire or possess any firearm, stun gun, or taser,” or ammunition, without having a state-issued FOID card.

ISP has 30 days from the date it receives an application and filing fee to either approve or deny that request. For renewals, state police officials have 60 days.

State law also requires individuals obtain an Illinois Concealed Carry License in order to carry a concealed firearm in Illinois. ISP typically has 90 days from the date it receives an application and fee to approve or deny the license request. If the application does not include a set of the applicant's fingerprints in digital format, ISP has an additional 30 days.

ISP and Kelly are also named in at least two pending federal lawsuits that allege the excessive delays in issuing new and renewed FOID cards ren-

ders the system unconstitutional because it effectively denies Illinoisans their Second Amendment right to possess a gun.

The long delays and significant backlog at the Firearms Services Bureau trace back to the budget impasse under Gov. Bruce Rauner, but these issues were exacerbated in 2020 when the agency saw increased applications for FOID cards and concealed carry licenses, according to the news release.

ISP reported it received 147,862 FOID card applications from March through June, and that figure was more than double the amount received in the prior four-month period.

The agency reported a 167 percent increase in FOID card applications, from 166,649 in 2017 to 445,945 as of November 2020.

There were 144,476 new FOID applications pending as of Dec. 7, 2020, according to ISP, while total new CCL pending applications are at 27,248.

Efforts at ISP to address the backlog and delays include hiring 21 Firearms Eligibility Analysts since March 2020, with 11 more set to start in January 2021, and adding 19 temporary contracted employees to the Firearms Services Bureau, according to the news release.

ISP also issued an emergency rule earlier this year for FOID card and CCL holders whose cards or licenses have expired. The rule allows for the card or license to remain valid during the duration of the state's disaster proclamation and for 18 months following the end of the disaster, as long as the card or license holder

submits a renewal application.

Davidsmeyer said this does not resolve the problem facing his constituents with expired cards because gun stores can decline to sell guns or ammunition to someone with an expired card.

“My constituents are going in during hunting season trying to purchase ammunition or even a new gun to go hunting, and they can't do it because their FOID (card) is expired. Even though the state police have said, we are going to extend this, the retailers are so concerned about the liability they may have if they do sell to the wrong person that they will not sell to anybody. And it's an understandable position to be in,” Davidsmeyer said.

Windhorst said he would prefer to eliminate the FOID card requirement, although he conceded such a proposal would not likely pass, given the makeup of the Illinois General Assembly.

“But, as I continue to push for repeal, I believe we can pass commonsense legislation to ease the burden on law abiding gun owners. These bills are designed to address complaints about delays of the FOID card, concealed carry license and firearm transfer system,” Windhorst said.


Those bills include a measure that would eliminate the 72-hour waiting period after purchasing a firearm for certain individuals who possess a valid conceal carry license; and a measure to require the Illinois State Police to automatically renew any concealed carry license holders' FOID card, as long as their concealed carry license is in good standing.



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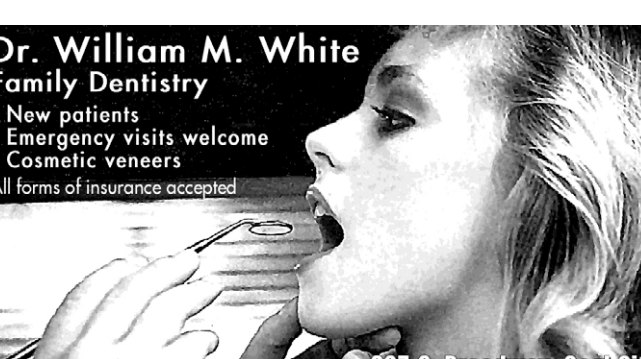


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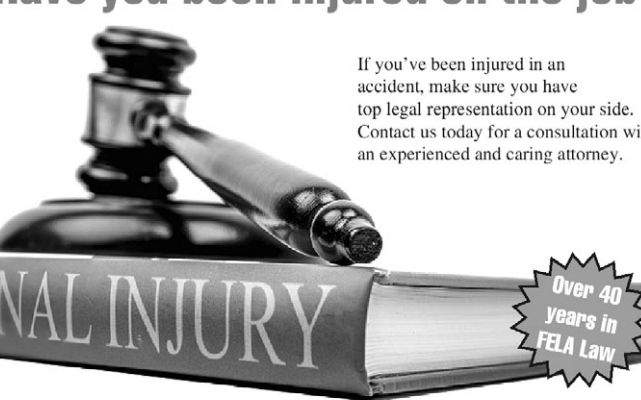


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When possible, use reusable bags and ask children to decorate newspaper with markers or butcher block paper. Never place bows or ribbons in the recycling cart. Consider tying gifts with natural twine that can be composted.

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Escape holiday stress with a tropical drink in December

It's the most wonderful time of the year! For holiday cheer? Decorations? Letters to Santa? All of those things are wonderful, but there is one thing that home tiki bar enthusiasts look forward to each December: the arrival of white grapefruit in local supermarkets.

Some drinks simply must have white grapefruit as opposed to the more popular ruby red variety, and this week we will mix up one of the all-time greats. I'm talking about the curiously strong sweet and sour tiki staple, the Navy Grog.

Before we get into the Navy Grog, let's talk white grapefruit. They begin to appear in produce aisles around mid-November and hang around until the end of January if the growers in Florida had a good harvest.

If a recipe is over 50 years old and calls for grapefruit juice, then the recipe calls for white grapefruit juice. Ruby red grapefruit may rule the citrus aisle in modern grocery stores, but white grapefruit was the only option for chefs and bartenders of yesteryear.

Can't we substitute ruby red grapefruit for white grapefruit? No. The flavor profiles are completely different. Ruby Red is tart and very sweet, whereas the sweetness of the white grapefruit is more subdued.

The white grapefruit may have lost the popularity contest to the bright ruby reds, but the less complex sweetness of the white grapefruit makes it more ideal for mixing drinks.

By the way, the European and Asian markets love white grapefruit. Most of the white grapefruit grown domestically is bottled and juiced for international markets.

If you cannot locate fresh white grapefruit, there are a few juice options available, be sure to buy only "100% juice" options without added sweetener.

A few tips and tricks when preparing white grapefruit for your home bar:

First, use a juicer if you have access to one, even an inexpensive juicer will get the job done. When juicing, do not press the fruit so hard that you force the juice out of the pith of the fruit as it will be a tad bitter compared to the juice from the center of the fruit.

I buy a box of white grapefruit every year, which yields nearly a gallon of juice. Another great tip for bar home bar service is to bottle and refrigerate the juice that you will use over the next few days, and freeze the rest.

The best way to freeze white grapefruit juice is to fill ice trays with the grapefruit juice, which yields perfect 1 oz. cubes, ideal portions for mixing future drinks.

Also, white grapefruit juice is an excellent way to lightly sweeten your fruit or vegetable smoothie.

On to the Navy Grog. This is an iconic drink that has been a fan favorite at Polynesian-themed bars and restaurants since it was first served in 1941. There are two main varieties of the Navy Grog, one made famous by Don the Beachcomber and the other made famous by Trader Vic. The recipe below is closer to the Trader Vic version.

The Trader Vic version has



THE SUNDAY COCKTAIL

Brian Rung

had many fans over the years, including former president Richard Nixon. The rival Donn the Beachcomber recipe was one of Frank Sinatra's favorite cocktails, one that he would sip while dining in California. Do you have a favorite version? Let's try the recipe below on for size.

A quick glance at the six-ingredient recipe may be a bit intimidating, knowing what to buy is half the battle. As far as rum goes, this drink is best with two types of dark rum. I like Myer's Original Dark or Appleton 12 for the Jamaican rum and El Dorado 12 for the demerara. You could also get by using Pusser's Navy Rum, which is a blend of Jamaican and demerara rums.

The Navy Grog calls for allspice dram, a pimento liqueur that you may not run across every day. Allspice dram is a complex Jamaican liqueur with notes of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves that you can prepare at home using any number of online recipes.

If you do not have the time or the ingredients to go the DIY route, pick up a bottle of St. Elizabeth Allspice Dram, a high-quality liqueur made in the Jamaican tradition. It doesn't smell or taste like anything else, and less always more when using allspice dram. However, you will not achieve Navy Grog nirvana without it.

If it seems out of season to drink tropical drinks in December, think of it as an escape. Perhaps this is a drink that we would have had on vacation this year had we taken

vacations. Also, if you start working on your Navy Grog now, you will have it perfected by summer. Just in time for the Navy Grog's 80th birthday. Hopefully we can add that to a lengthy "cause for celebration" list in 2021.

The Navy Grog is built in shaker and served in an ice-filled double Old Fashioned glass.

Combine in shaker:
3/4 oz. fresh lime juice



1/2 oz. fresh white grapefruit juice
1 oz. dark Jamaican rum
1 oz. demerara rum
1/2 oz. simple syrup
1/4 oz. St. Elizabeth Allspice Dram
Shake with ice and strain into ice-filled glass
Garnish with lime wheel
Until next week, enjoy responsibly.

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Seven from area make Olivet dean's list

Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais has named seven area residents to its fall 2020 dean's list.

To qualify for inclusion on the dean's list, a student must have been enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student

and must have attained a semester grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 grading scale.

Earning a spot on the list are Faith Vinci, of Custer Park, and Braidwood residents Rachel Barks and McKenna

Snyder.

Also Sean Micetich, of Coal City, and Wilmington residents Matthew Baumeister, Conner Dempsay and Abby Holmes.

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OBITUARIES

Frank A. Mantia Jr.

WILMINGTON—Frank A. Mantia Jr., 67, of Wilmington, passed away suddenly on Saturday, Dec. 5, 2020 at Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee.

He was born June 9, 1953 in Joliet, the son of Frank and Edith (Fortey) Mantia. He was a graduate of Wilmington High School and Joliet Junior College. Upon graduation from high school, Frank became a proud member of Ironworkers Union Local #444 in Joliet, retiring in 2016 following 45 years of service.

In his free time, Frank enjoyed boating on Lake Michigan while spending many weekends and holidays at North Port Marina. He also enjoyed Chicago Bears football and had a passion for animal rescue. Frank will continue to enhance lives by his gift of organ and tissue donation through the Gift of Hope Network.

Frank is survived by his loving partner in

life, Cheryl-Ann Koren; sisters, Phyllis Mantia and Gayle (Dennis) VanDuyne of Henderson, NV; brothers, William and Scott Mantia, both of Wilmington. Frank was also the proud uncle of Evan, Jack and David VanDuyne, of Henderson, NV.

He was preceded in death by his parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

As it was Frank's request, cremation rites will be accorded. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, service and burial honoring Frank's life will be held at a later date for all family and friends. Details will be forthcoming.

To visit his Memorial Tribute go to www.fredcdames.com to share a favorite memory or leave an online condolence.

Fred C. Dames Funeral home in Joliet is in charge of arrangements.



Leslie Wessman

BRAIDWOOD—Leslie (Sutter) Wessman, 71, a 17 year resident of Braidwood, passed away Dec. 13, 2020 in Temecula, CA.

She was born Aug. 18, 1949 to Lee and Ruth Sutter. She was a member of The Lighthouse Church of Alsip and Wilmington Church of the Nazarene. Leslie loved the Lord and her family with her whole heart. She was always around with a smile, talking to everyone she met, writing in her bible, tending to her garden, dancing with her tambourine and bells on at church, or sitting around the campfire

playing music with her husband, Kurt. Leslie sang to her own beat loud enough for all to hear, spreading joy and love everywhere she went.

She is survived by her husband, Kurt Wessman; sister, Dawn (John) Pecnick; sons: Eventide (Nicole) Wessman, Luke (Ashli) Wessman and Judah (Ashley) Wessman; daughter, Sara Wessman and grandchildren: Celeste, Angelina, Cole and Gwendolyn.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Lee and Ruth Sutter and brothers, Scott and Bradley Sutter.



Michael W. Davies

SOUTH WILMINGTON—Michael Wayne Davies "Miky," 37, of South Wilmington, passed away on Dec. 6, 2020. He was born Nov. 7, 1983.

Michael will be missed by so many, including his mother, Karyn Mitchell, of South Wilmington; his dad, Mark A Page, of Elgin, IL; Auntie's Jo Jo (Robert Dwyer), of Flannigan and Dawn Temke and family, of Kentucky; cousins: Nicole (Mike Corrigan) and family, of Flannigan and Anthony (Megan Dwyer) and family, of Hoffman Estates and

uncle, Robert Davies, of Lansing, IL.

He will be missed by many other family members and friends. Miky could walk into a room knowing no one and walk out with many friends.

Cremation arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Planet Green Cremations, Glenwood, IL.

There will be no memorial or services. Michael will be brought home to his mother where he belongs. Rest in Peace sweet baby, your fight is over.



Ryan S. Ford

RIVERVIEW, FL— Ryan S. Ford, 31, passed away on Friday, Nov. 27, 2020, at home in Riverview, FL after an asthma attack.

Born July 17, 1989 in Joliet, he was the son of devoted mother, Brenda "Kat" Falasca Ford, of Riverview, FL and father, Sean L. Ford, of Wilmington.

Ryan was raised in Coal City. He was a graduate of Coal City Elementary and High School. He attended college at Scottsdale Community College. He was employed at Ford Family Law and worked from home. As a child, he enjoyed Motocross. He also enjoyed riding dirt bikes, fishing, Ultimate Online, visiting his grandparents in Arizona and vacationing in Hayward, WI. He had many

friends in Arizona and Illinois.

Surviving are his mother and father, his brother and best friend, Brandon "Bubba" Ford, of Riverview, FL; siblings: Courtney Simons, Adam and Carly Ford; his maternal grandparents, Jack and Lori Reid, of Falasca, Corpus Christi, TX; his aunt, Linda Falasca Haley, of Chippewa Falls, WI; his paternal grandparents, Lawrence "Cubby" and Joy Watson Ford, of Mesa, AZ; uncles, Shane Ford, of San Francisco, CA and Jason Ford, of Gilbert, AZ and nieces and nephews.

At Ryan's request, cremation rites have been accorded. A memorial service will be held at a later date.



Harry Lambert

CUSTER PARK—Harry Wayne Lambert, 69, of Custer Park, formerly of Bradenton, FL, passed away Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2020 at his home.

Born Dec. 20, 1950 in Joliet, Harry was a son of Elra and Frieda (Krumwiede) Lambert. He was raised and educated in Wilmington, and graduated from Wilmington High School with the class of 1969. Harry enlisted into the United States Army in 1970, and served until his honorable discharge in 1972. He lived in Bradenton, FL for many years and worked for Harlee Packaging Inc. in Palmetto, FL as a foreman until his retirement.

Following his retirement, Harry moved to Custer Park and was a member of the Loyal Order of Moose Lodge 241. He found great joy in being outdoors and watching local wildlife. Harry was an avid gardener who loved to tend to his flowers and vegetable garden. He enjoyed cooking and canning, and loved to read. Harry had a great appreciation for animals, especially his feline companion, Pita.

Survivors include his wife, Narcisa (Cleary) Lambert; three siblings: Marilyn Scholari, of Joliet; Richard (Judy) Lambert, of Jordan, MN and Charlene (Bill) Engler, of Hixton, WI; one brother-in-law, Roy Stuart, of Kankakee and numerous nieces and nephews, as well as his life long friend, Marie Calhoun.

Harry was preceded in death by his parents, his brothers: Tommy, Elra, Elwin, Elwood, Jim, Gene and John and his sisters: Janice Stuart, Janet Adamson and Charlotte O'Donnell.

Per Harry's wishes, cremation rites have been accorded and memorial services will be held at a later date.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guest book, upload photographs, and share Harry's memorial page by logging onto: www.BaskervilleFuneral.com

Cremation services and memorial arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Baskerville Funeral Home in Wilmington.



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Peter Odo

DIAMOND—Peter Odo, 70, of Diamond, passed away Monday, Dec. 14, 2020 at Morris Hospital.

Peter was born Oct. 9, 1950 in Chicago, IL. He was raised and educated in Braidwood, and graduated from Reed-Custer High School with the class of 1968. On Aug. 17, 1970, Peter married Linda L. Endrst in Morris, and together they would raise their family in Diamond.

He served as a police officer in Coal City from 1972 to 1986. Peter then entered the trucking profession and was a proud member of Teamsters Local Union 710 and 736. He was also a member of Assumption Catholic Church in Coal City and the Coal City Area Club. Peter was an avid fisherman and looked forward to any opportunity he had to go fishing, especially his family trips to Cape Faar, MO. More than anything, he was a true family man that devoted himself to being a loving husband and father, and cherished anytime spent with his grandchildren.

Survivors include his wife of 50 years, Linda Odo, of Diamond; four daughters: Kimmy Odo, Tami (Peter) Maland, Shari (Chad) Talkington and Gina (Keith) Wharrie, all of Coal City; seven

grandchildren: Dakota and Carson Collins, Rita, Peter and Charles Maland and Gwen and Thor Wharrie; sister-in-law, Janice "Pinky" (the late Ed "Butch") Olson, of Coal City; brother-in-law, Dave Powell, of Coal City; several nieces and nephews, as well as Tony Maland, who was like family to Peter.

Peter was preceded in death by his mother-in-law and father-in-law, John and Rita (Giro) Endrst, and his sister-in-law, Janet Powell.

Per Peter's wishes, cremation rites are being accorded and he will be laid to rest at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, please make any donations in Peter's memory to: St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 262 Danny Thomas Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guest book, upload photographs, and share Peter's memorial page by logging onto: www.ReevesFuneral.com

Cremation services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves Funeral Homes, Ltd. in Coal City.



Raymond T. Briggs Jr.



KYLE, TX—Raymond T. Briggs Jr., 68, passed away peacefully in his home in Kyle, TX on Dec., 5, 2020, after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

Ray was born on May 25, 1952 in Chicago to Raymond T. Briggs Sr. and Joan (Thompson) Briggs. In 1973, Ray married Linda (Recchia) in Chicago. Ray attended Bogan High School before joining the Army. He served our country for 6 years and always made sure to support our veterans. Throughout his life, Ray was most proud to provide for his wife and children, and exceptionally proud that all of his children graduated college.

In his free time, he was an avid Chicago Bears and White Sox fan. He enjoyed vintage cars and loved Chicago style pizza. Nothing made him happier than going to his oldest grandson's baseball games, his granddaughters' dance recitals, and experiencing his youngest grandson's giggles.

He will be most remembered for his generosity and putting everyone else's needs before himself. Everyone knew Ray by his old school mustache, great sense of humor, and we all enjoyed his South Side Chicago accent.

Ray is survived by his wife of 47 years, Linda (Recchia) Briggs; daughter, Michelle; her husband, Scott and grandchildren: Nico, Brixie Sue and Savannah; son, Scott; his wife, Elicia and

step-grandchild, Monyca; son, Jeff; his wife, Natalie and grandchild, Wyatt and son, Steven and his fiancé, Marcela. Ray is also survived by his siblings: Jean Wagner, Jackie Durrant and Mary Porter.

A private family service was held on Sunday, Dec. 13, 2020 at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd., in Wilmington and the virtual service is accessible by logging onto his memorial page.

Raymond was laid to rest with military honors at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood. Due to cemetery limitation of only 10 being able to be in attendance, this virtual service event is also accessible by logging onto his memorial page.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials in Ray's name to the Wounded Warriors Project <https://support.woundedwarriorproject.org> would be appreciated.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Ray's memorial page online through social media by logging onto: www.BaskervilleFuneral.com/obituary/Raymond-BriggsJr

Funeral services and arrangements were made under the direction and care of Baskerville Funeral Home in Wilmington, Illinois.



Braceville-Gardner Cemetery donations

As the year comes to a close the Braceville-Gardner Cemetery board would like everyone to think about family, friends and loved ones buried at the cemetery. The board is in great need of financial help to keep the cemetery running. They run strictly on grave sales and burials with no other source of income.

The following donations to the Braceville-Gardner Cemetery are gratefully acknowledged by the Braceville-Gardner Cemetery Association.

In memory of Nels Olson family, by Alan and Beth Olson.

In memory of Delores and Donald Vacca, by John Vacca and family.

In memory of loved ones, by Marvin and Kris Perino.

In memory of Wharrie Family, by Larry and Shirley Wharrie.

In memory of Sam Brancato, by Avis Brancato.

In memory of loved ones, by D Construction family.

In memory of John, Elizabeth, Nell and Gary Jr., by

Gary Lissy.

In memory of Kathy Kratochvil, by Lynn Kratochvil.

In memory of Mable and Jim Morris and Gordie Allison, by Wayne and Joyce Morris and family.

In memory of Allison family, by Allison Family Farm.

In memory of Herman and Mary Cullick, by Bernie and Debra Burla.

In memory of family and friends, by Scott Benson.

In memory of loved ones, by Shirley Simpson.

In memory of loved ones, by Shirley and John Lardi.

In memory of Junior W. Zilm, by Bettie Zilm.

In memory of Iona Rabe, and Smith family, by Ray and Bonnie Hill.

In memory of Edwin and Ann Crompt, by Marla Crompt.

In memory of John McLuckie, by Tessler family.

In memory of Isaac and Russell Bull, by Betty Bull.

In memory of Ida and Jeff Grant, by Bernard Grant.

In memory of Gary Lissy Jr., Audrey Endrst and Keith

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More than one-in-three small businesses closed since January

Illinois businesses see 39.2 percent drop in revenue

BY GREG BISHOP
THE CENTER SQUARE

Illinois has lost more than a third of its small businesses since the beginning of the year, according to TrackTheRecovery.org.

A small business association said it is heartbreaking.

The data compiled by Harvard and Brown universities and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation shows as of Nov. 16, the number of small businesses open decreased by 35.4 percent compared to January of this year.

The national average businesses not open compared to January is 28.9 percent fewer. Washington D.C. had the worst loss at 47.1 percent fewer small businesses. Nebraska and North Carolina had the best showing at 20.5 percent fewer.

Small business revenues have also taken a hit nationwide. The national average is a

decrease of 32.1 percent in small business revenue since January. Washington D.C. had the worst loss in the nation at 61.6 percent. Oregon small businesses lost 16.3 percent. Illinois small businesses saw 39.2 percent decline in revenue since January.

National Federation of Independent Business Illinois State Director Mark Grant said Illinois isn't the worst in the nation.

"But that's no consolation for somebody who has had to close their business and it's really, really difficult to see this," Grant said.

He said Illinois was a tough place to run a business before the pandemic with higher costs like property taxes and workers' comp, among other policies.

"Just make it tougher for the business owner and the pandemic and of course all the closures, the reduced hours, and reduced amount of traffic, have just exacerbated that tremendously," Grant said.

While many businesses have thrown in the towel or decided to retire early, he sees many young entrepreneurs

determined to keep going as a hopeful sign.

"It's really heartening to see that generation, some of our younger folks, who are just really working hard to get through this, because there is a light at the end of the tunnel," Grant said.

But part of the challenge is the uncertainty of the governor's executive orders, which have changed month-to-month and seem open-ended pending a vaccine. He also worried about where the state could look to make up lost tax revenue.

"It will probably be targeted towards the business community and so there are concerns about that," Grant said. "I know there have always been concerns about taxes on services."

Besides the flat income tax, Illinois also taxes goods, but does not tax services.

Gov. J.B. Pritzker has said he will focus on cuts before tax increases to balance the budget, but last week he announced \$2 billion of additional borrowing from the federal government to cover short term spending.

Noticing Memory Problems? What to Do Next

Dear Savvy Senior,
My mom, who's 76, has become more forgetful lately and is worried she may be getting Alzheimer's disease. What resources can you recommend to help us get a handle on this?
Oldest Daughter

Dear Oldest,
Many seniors worry about memory lapses as they get older, fearing it may be the first signs of Alzheimer's disease or some other type of dementia. To get some insight on the seriousness of your mom's problem, here are some key warning signs to be vigilant of and some resources you can turn to for help.

Warning Signs

As we grow older, some memory difficulties such as

trouble remembering names of people or places or forgetting where you put your glasses or car keys are associated with normal aging. But the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease are much more than simple memory lapses.

Knowing the early warning signs is a good first step in recognizing the difference between typical age-related memory loss and a more serious problem. To help you evaluate your mom's condition, here's a checklist of some common early symptoms to watch for:

- Asking the same questions repeatedly.
- Getting lost in familiar areas.
- Failing to recognize familiar people.

- Having difficulty following directions.
- Misplaces items in inappropriate places, for example putting her keys in the microwave.
- Having difficulty completing familiar tasks like cooking a meal or paying a bill.
- Having trouble remembering common words when speaking or mixing up words.

For more information, see the Alzheimer's Association list of 10 early signs and symptoms at 10signs.org.

Another good tool to help you evaluate your mom is the Self-Administered



Jim Miller

Gerocognitive Exam (SAGE test) that was developed at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. This free test helps identify mild cognitive impairment and early dementia and can be taken at home in about 10 to 15 minutes. The SAGE test can be taken online at BrainTest.com.

Get Help

If you would rather have professional assistance in evaluating your mom, the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (see alzfdn.org) is

another good resource you can turn to.

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday they provide free, confidential virtual memory screenings done via video chat in real time. Your mother will need a phone, tablet or computer with a webcam and internet capability to complete the screening.

The screenings are given by healthcare professionals and take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Once the screening is complete, the screener will review the results with her and let her know if she should see a doctor for further evaluation. To set up a memory screening for your mom call 866-232-8484 and make an appointment.

If you find that your mom does need further evaluation, make an appointment with her primary care doctor for a cognitive checkup and medical

examination. Depending on what's found, she may be referred to a geriatrician or neurologist who specializes in diagnosing and treating memory loss or Alzheimer's disease.

Keep in mind that even if your mom is experiencing some memory problems, it doesn't necessarily mean she has early-stage Alzheimer's. Many memory problems are brought on by other factors like stress, depression, thyroid disease, side effects of medications, sleep disorders, vitamin deficiencies and other medical conditions. And by treating these conditions she can reduce or eliminate the problem.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.

Winning opossum pic brings joy to ER tech during pandemic

A cuddly-looking baby opossum nestled in the woods won November's portion of the Forest Preserve District of Will County's Preserve the Moment photo contest.

The picture was taken by Teresa Wisnieski at Lower Rock Run - I&M Canal Access in Joliet.

Wisnieski, of Joliet, who is an emergency room technician at Edward Hospital in Naperville, said her hikes in the preserve and her wildlife viewing and photography have all helped with the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic at work.

"It has been a great source of happiness during the pandemic," she said. "It is such a good stress reliever to get outside and be in nature. It's a great source of relaxation. That preserve is so full of wildlife and nature and it's ever changing."

On a recent hike, she heard some rustling in the woods and looked down and saw a large opossum foraging for food. She watched it for a while until she noticed a baby opossum waiting for the larger opossum, which appeared to be the baby's mother. So Wisnieski quickly snapped some photos of the pink-nosed baby, with its pink paw resting on a fallen tree, and then left it alone so as not to disturb the creatures.

"It made me smile because it's such a cute little opossum," she said of the marsupial in her winning photo. "So I thought I would share it (to the contest) because it brought me some joy."

Wisnieski also has begun sharing her photos to the Forest Preserve's Will County Wildlife Facebook group.

"I look forward to contin-



Courtesy photo by Teresa Wisnieski

JOLIET RESIDENT Teresa Wisnieski, who works as an ER tech at Edward Hospital in Naperville, won November's portion of the Forest Preserve District of Will County's photo contest with this photo of a baby opossum.

ued walks in the preserves and sharing my photos with others online," she said. "Thanks to those behind the scenes who give us nature lovers a place to go to share photos and also stories to read that help us learn more about the nature and preserves in Will County."

Honorable mentions for November were awarded to: Matt Serafini, of Lockport, for a photo of a camouflaged deer in tall grass at Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve in Lockport Township; Tyler Paul, of Wilmington, for a photo of a great horned owl roosting in a

tree at Forked Creek Preserve in Wilmington; Michael Masallis, of Naperville, for a photo of oil beetles "snuggling" at Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve in Reed Township and Caitlin Satalic, of Plainfield, for a photo of a colorful cecropia caterpillar at Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve.

Wisnieski is the seventh monthly winner in the 2020 photo contest. Only one more monthly winner will be chosen by a panel of judges before the contest concludes Dec. 31. In January, all eight monthly win-

ners will vie for top honors via public voting on the District's Facebook page.

Monthly photo contest winners receive \$75 gift cards. Overall winners chosen in January will receive MasterCard gift cards worth \$500 for first place, \$250 for second place and \$150 for third place. The photo contest is sponsored by The Nature Foundation of Will County.

For more details on the contest, including how to enter and the rules, visit www.reconnectwithnature.org.

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Madigan still the fixer king who gets things done

Outsiders may not get it, but it makes some sense that the majority of House Democrats still back House Speaker Michael Madigan's reelection.

He's been a genius at getting things done for his caucus. He is loyal to his people and has infinitely more institutional memory and can pull more strings and push more buttons than anyone alive.

In his nearly 50 years in office, Madigan has been heavily

involved with four legislative remap processes and has been in the House for five of them.

Madigan has played a decisive role in every income tax increase (temporary and permanent) since the tax was established in 1969 - and he was a delegate to the constitutional convention which created it.

He has also negotiated dozens of budgets since he became House Speaker in

1983.

His campaign operation meticulously tracks the number of knocked doors in contested races and every contact made, and he reviews that data each week and calls candidates to provide his feedback. He knows how to win.

And at this moment in history, with redistricting coming up, a huge revenue shortfall, horrific budget problems, a massively destructive pandemic causing rampant suffering and, in less than two years, a midterm election under a Democratic president (with a new map), most of his members are rightly worried sick.

For these and many other reasons, this is exactly the moment when his members would need Madigan the most, and he most certainly knows this and is deftly playing on that angst as 19 of his members are in open revolt.

But the sweeping and aggressive federal investigation is this/close to Madigan now. Despite all of his protests of innocence and some reasonable arguments that he did nothing illegal, the G is obviously after Madigan's head.

Gov. JB Pritzker has taken loads of heat for not pushing Madigan out of office, even though he couldn't do it if he tried. Pritzker is up for reelection in 2022 and a Madigan reelection would certainly mean big trouble. Yes, Pritzker won by 16 points two years ago, but that was during an unpopular Republican president's midterm against a super-weak incumbent. He's going to have to hustle to win.

A gubernatorial confrontation with a reelected Madigan is inevitable.



Rich Miller

Pritzker pledged during the campaign and ever since taking office that he will veto a legislative redistricting plan that isn't "fair" which was defined (by me) in March of 2018 as any proposal "that is in any way drafted or created by legislators, political party leaders and/or their staffs or allies."

So, when Madigan told the House Black Caucus during a recent private meeting that he is the best person to draw the new map, he guaranteed that Pritzker had to veto it. There will be no finessing Pritzker's pledge. And overriding a veto will be hugely difficult because suburbanites who ran as good government types in swing districts and true-blue progressives are gonna be in a major quandary. It's pretty difficult to see how this fight gets as far as an override showdown.

Speaker Madigan also said during the meeting that he was prepared to pass another income tax increase if the governor requests it. Like with his remap pledge, his statement likely killed the already very slim prospects for a tax hike.

Just imagine the governor (or any vulnerable Democrat) running in 2022 with Madigan still in office, a Madigan-drawn district map in place and a Madigan tax hike. Maybe the Democrats will get lucky and the Republicans will nominate unelectable far-right candidates, but basing your plan on your opponent collapsing is never a wise idea.

So, it's just difficult to see how Speaker Madigan can keep all the reelection campaign promises he's making.

If he wants to avoid the risk of a new district map being possibly drawn by the

Republicans after a losing veto fight, he'll likely have to submit to a new process which won't be nearly as advantageous to his members.

A Madigan-backed tax hike is pretty much out of the question. Same goes for a gimicky Madigan budget. And while he's been the patronage and fixer king for decades, how much can he actually accomplish for his members when he's under this horribly dark cloud?

No matter what, Madigan still has his unmatched campaign prowess going for him.

But if he somehow manages to flip enough votes to get reelected in the first place and the feds don't take him out, the reality going forward will be much different than he's making it out to be.

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

Illinois gas prices cool down from last week's spike

Illinois gas prices have fallen 1 cent per gallon in the past week, averaging \$2.16/g Monday, according to GasBuddy's daily survey of 4,378 stations. Gas prices in Illinois are unchanged versus a month ago and stand 40.7 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Illinois is priced at \$1.11/g Monday while the most expensive is \$2.81/g, a difference of \$1.70/g. The lowest price in the state is \$1.11/g while the highest is \$2.81/g, a difference of \$1.70/g.

The national average price of gasoline has fallen 0.7 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$2.14/g Monday. The national average is up 1.4 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 41.4 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

Neighboring areas and their current gas prices: Peoria - \$2.24/g, down 2.1 cents per gallon from last week's

\$2.26/g. St. Louis - \$1.91/g, down 0.3 cents per gallon from last week's \$1.91/g. Champaign - \$2.13/g, unchanged from last week's \$2.13/g.

"After gas prices spiked last week in their biggest weekly rise since August, we've seen them cool back down for the time being. With COVID-19 cases continuing to rise and restrictions weighing on gasoline demand, we're likely to see optimism over vaccinations offset by lower current demand for the most part," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy.

"In the weeks ahead as that balance shifts and millions get the vaccination, if things look much improved, I would expect for a longer upward move in gas prices. For now, however, the holidays will be marked by the lowest seasonal prices in years."

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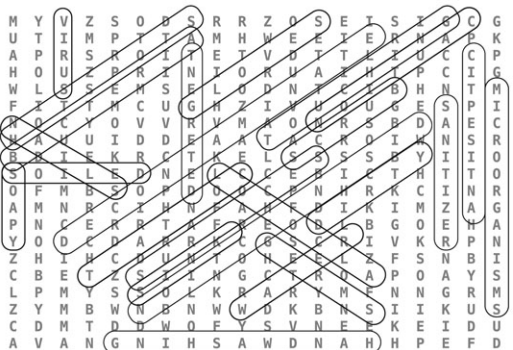
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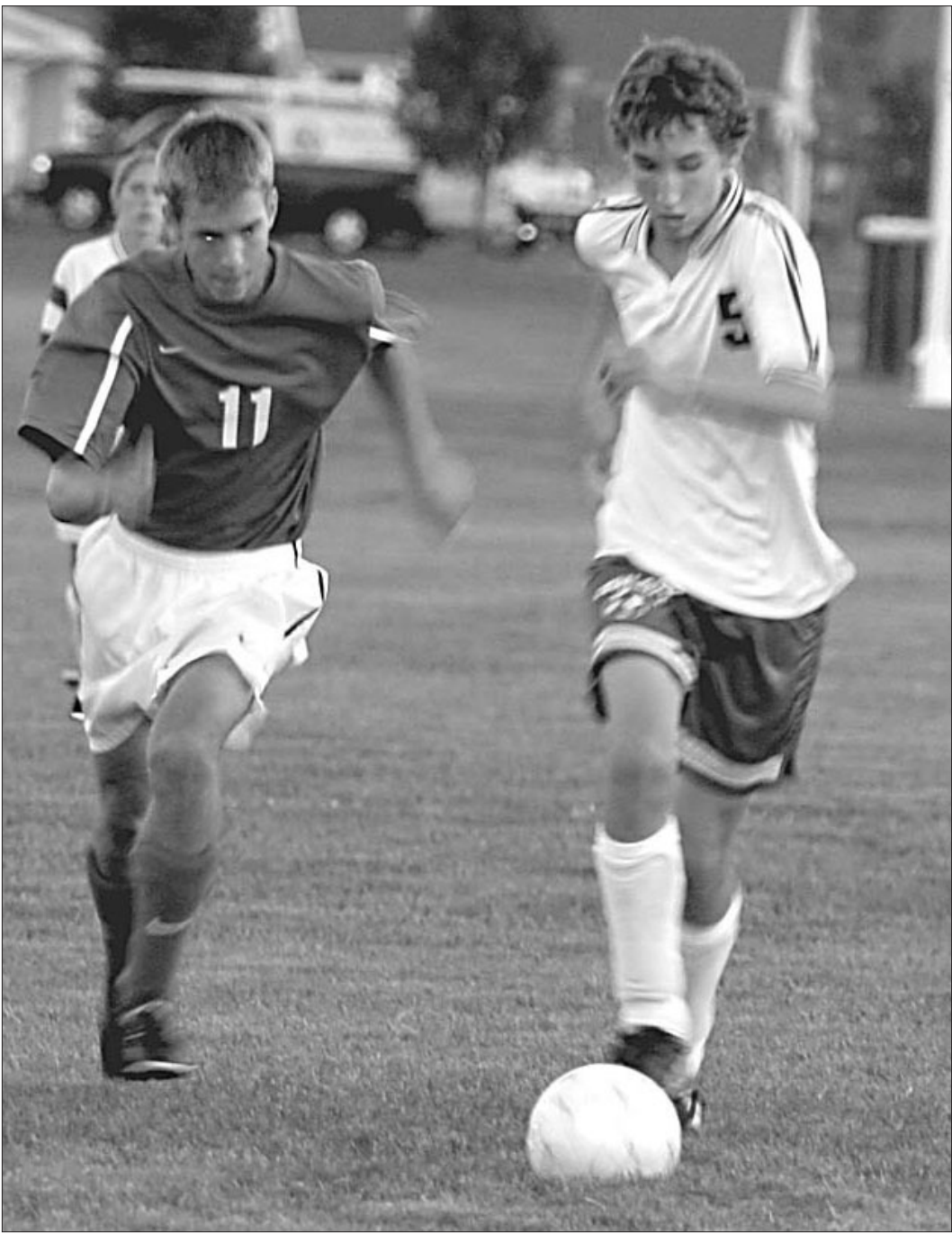
THE BRAIDWOOD
JOURNAL

COALER SPORTS



File Photo

COAL CITY'S JASON Fritz was selected for the soccer dream team. Fritz is tied for the career lead in goals with 42.



File Photo

COAL CITY'S MICHAEL O'Keefe was named to the soccer dream team. O'Keefe was an excellent defender for coach Branden Petersen.

Soccer

Trevor Neff

Neff was a sophomore starting on the 2002 team, who was one of the leaders in assists.

"Around the 2003 season, he wasn't necessarily on all the record boards but he was the best player around that time," added Steve. Trevor scored the second most goals that year and had the most assists. He was a midfielder. He had very good ball control, very smart and was a very good passer."

Branden Petersen, who led the Coalers 27 wins from 2006-12, had a few guys in mind.

Travis Peters

Peters was a captain on the 2008 Coalers, who won six games, was a very good player and is mentioned on an assist list, having three assists in a game.

"He had amazing foot-work," said Petersen. "He could juggle the ball a thousand times but he was a defender type player and he saw the field really well and was a really aggressive good player."

Zach Pierard

Zach played for Petersen in 2011. He was one of the leading scorers, knocking through eight goals.

"Zach was my best forward. He led the team in goals his sophomore through senior year. In his junior and senior year, he was All-Conference.



File Photo

HUNTER BANNON was selected as a backup goalie behind Mike Noffsinger on the dream team. Bannon is second in career saves behind the St. Francis alum Noffsinger.

He just had a really knack for the goal. He didn't take a lot of shots just found the net a lot.

Tony Norris

Tony and Zach complemented each other scoring on

Petersen's 2011 team.

"They were like a 1-2 with Zach. Zach would be assisting Tony and then Tony would be assisting Zach.

Trevor Simmonds

Simmonds played mid-field for Petersen and was very good at it.

"He was the best all-around midfielder I've ever had," added Petersen. "He had a just really great soccer sense. He understood how to play a center midfield. To play a center midfield is probably the most difficult position because you're 50 percent offense and 50 percent defense. He saw the field well and he had a huge foot. He'd take all of your place kicks."

Clay Kauzlaric

Clay was the valedictorian for the class and also played really well on the soccer field as he was able to do it all. He was also a team captain.

"He played defense for me," commented Petersen. "He's a really tall, big bodied kid but was super fearless."

Colton & Trevor Wiegand

Colton and Trevor played both midfield and forward.

"Both very good players. They were never all-conference but they were contributing factors. The same as Mike O'Keefe back in Travis Peters' area.

Dylan Kunz & Zach Bretz

Petersen notes Kunz and

Bretz were two pretty good goalies that would add some depth behind Noffsinger and Bannon.

"Both were really agile and could get out of the box.

Both had really big feet so you didn't have to worry about your place kicks," continued Petersen. Both players worked their way into that position.

They were very loud in the

goalie box and you have to be."

Tyler Hassert was also mentioned in Petersen's dream team selections.

Steve, who led the Coalers to 43 wins over his four seasons, had his dream team backups ready.

Hunter Bannon

Bannon, who played on the Coal City soccer team from 2014-17, is the second-leading goalkeeper in Coaler history. Bannon secured 577 saves as a Coaler. He'd be a great option behind Noffsinger.

"Besides Noffsinger, he was the other goalie that just kind of sticks out.

Austin Planeta & Sean McGouirk

Planeta, who played for Steve from 2016-19, was a very good player, who did it all.

"Planeta was a leader and he definitely took on a big role especially going what he went through as a high schooler. He definitely set a good example for everyone else. His kicks were great. His free kicks and his ability to get shots off and the ability to make the shots go where he wanted them to whether it was power or curve, he had such a unique way of shooting the ball in any situation he had to score.

Sean, who was a suffocating defender, would fit in nicely on the team.

"Sean was just a monster on the defense and he just was able to get to any ball and keep up with any player no matter how good they were. He was always around the ball."



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Dream team features best of the Coaler kickers

BY SHAWN LONG
SPORTS WRITER

Coal City High School produced some very talented soccer players in a short time. Soccer is one of the youngest sports at CCHS, dating back to 1995.

Still, they've had some tremendous athletes that together would form an ideal dream team.

Kevin McCleary, who started the program, coached for three seasons, leading one of the third best records in the program's history (33-23).

While McCleary may have started the program, his son, Steve, was with him every step of the way and knew each player he coached, especially the good ones.

Kevin Enger & Jason Fritz

Steve began with some of the top goal scorers in Kevin Enger and Jason Fritz, who were tied lifetime with 42 career goals.

While Steve didn't know a lot about Fritz because he came after his dad's three seasons, he was able to fill in the gaps of how good of a player the late Kevin Enger was.

Enger was a mainstay in the Coalers lineup from 1995-99.

"He started all four years on varsity," said Steve. "He was very tall and very big for his age. He had long strides and was very smart and just a great overall leader. I just remember how great of a leader he was.

Enger led the 1997 Coalers to the sectional final as they went 17-6-2 throughout the season, beating Manteno to win the sectional championship.

Enger finished his senior season at CCHS with 10 goals and 10 assists.

"That was by far the farthest we've ever made it," added Steve. "It was the sectional final which was a very controversial game. I remember beating them pretty well.

Fritz came along the year after coach Kevin McCleary left the program but he was really good at scoring goals as he registered 20 in a season.

David Mola

Mola, who played on the sectional championship team with Enger, was the other leading goal scorer that complemented Kevin's play-making ability.

"Those two were kind of like a two man wrecking crew out there. They just cleaned house on the offensive end.

In 1998 in a game against Beecher, Mola sank four goals. Mola finished with four that year.

Kenny Mack

Mack, who was also on that team, took many shots on goal and as a result he leads the Coalers lifetime with 101 shots on goal during the 1997 season.

"He may not be leading anything but he was a huge contributor because he has...he's on a list with the most assists in a game, he has the most shots in a season and most shots in a game. He was a big time offensive contributor.

Mack finished with the most goals that season, banging through 13 with nine assists.

Mack was honored with a first-team All-Area accolade from the Kankakee Daily Journal.

Jason Rodriguez

Rodriguez, who played the wing position was another standout athlete on the sectional championship team.



File Photo

TYLER HASSERT was selected by his former coach Branden Petersen to be on the Coal City soccer dream team.

"He was a midfielder that might not have put up the stats that you would see. He was more of a defender. He was a beast. He could steal the ball, he could cross the ball and he was one of those guys that never came off the field because he was in such good shape."

Rodriguez did finish the 97 season with five goals and two assists.

Ian Elliott

Elliott was another top scorer on the 97

team, finishing with 11 goals and the team lead in assists, handing out 11.

"He was also given first team All-Area. He was just one of those small little guys that could slip away from people so easily. He was so good with his feet, so quick and just always seemed to be everywhere at all times.

His assignment was to cover the opponent's best player just like when he guarded the area's leading scorer Joe Gentile of Peotone in

1997.

Mike Noffsinger

That 1997 sectional championship team could not have gotten as far as they did if they didn't have Mike Noffsinger. Noffsinger still leads in career saves with 621 and saves in a season, snagging 299.

"He probably would have been the best player on the field that season. He was the closest that we've ever had to someone going to play Division 1 and he was also first team All-American as a junior. That season save total was more impressive because they were still going up against some pretty big schools like some Lincolnway's and Bourbonnais.

Noffsinger went to the University of St. Francis after high school where he still leads in career saves (444), is second in saves in a season (166), accumulated the second most minutes in goal (5,996) and leads with 16 career shutouts.

Coach Kevin McCleary notes Noffsinger was by far the best player Coal City has ever had.

"He was a good all-around player and could stop anything in goal," said Kevin. "If we had a big enough lead, Mike would be itching to play the field and an all-around good athlete and great player."

Steve McCleary

Steve, who played for his dad during that time was mentioned as one of the best players his time coaching. Steve was one of the leaders on the Coal City team that won 18 games (18-5-1, best record) in 2001.

"Steven was really good too," commented Kevin McCleary. "He was a great defender and an even better coach. He was one of our better players."

Brendan Pierard

Along with Steve, Pierard was another leader on the 2001 team and led the charge with 20 goals that season.

"We were all over," commented Steve. "I think that year we probably had nine seniors starting. A lot of us had played since it started and Pierard started as freshman. We lost that great senior class so a lot of us started in as sophomores in a rebuilding year so then by this point we all had 3-4 years of experience."

Brian Gabehart

Gabehart was another captain that led the 2001 team that was good at getting the ball to Pierard and other scorers, leading with 11 assists.

"Pierard and Gabehart were the top two forwards. They both had their fair share of assists and goals."

Blake Dankovich

Dankovich, who played the midfield, was a player who moved sideline to sideline with ease. He also contributed on the offensive end with 15 goals and 10 assists.

"He went everywhere. I think he was all-area. He didn't lead but was at the top end of both those categories. Dankovich was the main midfielder."

Ryan Darcy and Brenden Neff were also standout players on that team.

Jimmy Brata

Brata, who was a transfer student from , only played his senior year but ended up with the most goals in a single season, netting 33 in 2002.

"He was probably one of the best all-around players we've ever had. He moved from Plainfield but if he would've been here one year sooner, we would've been a much more impressive team."



File Photo

FORMER COAL CITY KICKER Trevor Simmonds was picked to be a member of the Coaler soccer dream team. Simmonds is one of the assist leaders at Coal City.