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add up



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WILMINGTON, IL | WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2024 | A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER (815) 476-7966

Ice jam causes highest flood in 137 years

BY ERIC FISHER
Publisher

It will take weeks to estimate the cost of damage caused by the highest flood to hit Wilmington in 137 years.

The City of Wilmington is working with the Will County Emergency Management Agency to survey the damage caused by flooding that began shortly after 10 p.m. Thursday as ice piled up in the main channel, causing the water level to rise nearly three feet through the island parks and mill race.

Will County EMA issued a mass notification message to residents just before midnight, advising them of the rising water levels and the need to evacuate. Water rescue teams were deployed, and 14 individuals were successfully evacuated to a temporary shelter opened by Wilmington ESDA.

The flash flood closed Highway 53 from Water Street to First Street as water surrounded the Van Duyn Motel, portions of Nelson's Furniture and nearby businesses. The river flowed across the highway for approximately 12 hours. By noon Friday the roadway was reopened. Police remained on standby since the island parks were still under water. Both islands remain closed to the public until damage can be assessed and roadways repaired.

"City staff worked around the clock to ensure the safety of residents during this flood event," said Wilmington Mayor Ben Dietz. "I appreciate everyone who stepped up to keep residents safe during this flooding event. Our work isn't finished yet. We are working to fully assess and repair the damage that occurred over the last few days."

The mayor praised first responders for their quick response in preventing loss of life and the city crew for working nonstop to keep the water plant operational even though its pump house flooded.

"For 14 hours I watched from the command center as our people operated with such professionalism," Dietz said. "Our first responders are top-notch. Foremost, they evacuated everyone safely, then had mutual aid and EMA from the county here within 30 minutes as the river continued to rise. The communication between agencies was tremendous. Even though we had been planning for two weeks for



Photo by David Quigley

THE NORTH ISLAND was under water Friday morning after an ice jam on the Kankakee River caused the water level to rise along the mill race. Highway 53 through Wilmington was closed late Thursday night until noon Friday while flooding impacted the island parks. The parks remain closed until city officials can assess the damage and repair the roadway.

possible flooding, you don't really know how things will go until it happens. And when it did, I was impressed with everyone's professionalism."

The Will County EMA and Wilmington ESDA had been monitoring the river for days as ice dams formed from the warm water discharge pumps near Bardwell Island upstream over eight miles to Custer Park. About 5 p.m. Thursday it began shifting downstream in the Lakewood Shores area causing pile ups in Wilmington. The ice jams between the city and the Des Plaines River confluence cleared out Saturday.

By 10:45 a.m. Saturday the U.S. Geological Survey Kankakee River gauge upstream of Interstate 55 recorded water levels at 6.89 feet. That was a drop of almost 9 feet from the recorded high of 15.62 feet on Friday evening due to a brief ice jam that formed near I-55. The peak level of water was the 3rd highest level recorded on the

Kankakee River in history and the highest since 1887.

The south island road suffered the most damage as ice piled up near the mill race bridge, damaging a new guard rail and lifting away sections of pavement. Dietz said Monday the city has yet to inspect the emergency water well and building on the South Island.

"We do not know the extent of damage for it. It was flooded and surrounded by ice. Fortunately it's just an emergency well we don't need right now."

Workers at the water treatment plant have been drying out and cleaning the pump house after water backed up into the low-lying area of Widow's Road. Clennon Electric is inspecting all the electronics that operate the pumps. Dietz said backup equipment, including spare pumps, are on site in case they fail to restart when everything



Photo by Eric Fisher

ROAD DAMAGE—The tip of the South Island park suffered the brunt of an ice dam on Thursday as it piled up against a guard rail that was installed last year while lifting up sections of pavement. The parks remain closed to the public.

SEE FLOOD PAGE 2

Public works crews stayed busy in 2023

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

You might not always notice the members of Wilmington's Public Works departments except when they are out patching streets or plowing roads.

But the crews that keep and maintain those vital operations get little downtime, with important systems to maintain and work to address to make sure the city's utilities and

streets stay open and operational.

Wilmington Public Works Director James Gretencord provided the annual report for the Public Works department during the Jan. 9 Committee of the Whole meeting.

Of the more than 500 work orders that came to the department in 2023, the majority, 38%, were to address improvements. Nearly 9% of work orders were dedicated to inspections, 18% to reactive maintenance, and 5.6% to pre-

ventative maintenance.

The majority of work orders addressed grounds, while additional work orders included addressing equipment, hydrants, street sweeping, sewer work, lighting, downed trees, damaged signs, water leaks, water main breaks, water service installations, and road maintenance.

The department also completed 425 water meter changes last year. Gretencord's report included the following activity for 2023.

City Crew:

- Completed over 580 work orders
- Milled and repaved over 6,500 sq. feet of potholes
- Conducted 49 sewer cleanings
- Performed 41 vehicle/equipment maintenance tasks
- Completed 24 event setups/clean-ups
- Addressed 13 water break/leak repairs
- Completed three Sidewalk Share Programs

Sewer Department:

- Treated over 340 million gallons of wastewater
- Completed over 650 utility locates
- Successfully passed the IEPA inspection

Water Department:

- Created over 220 million gallons of drinking water
- Completed over 200 service requests, including 125-meter replacements
- 71% water accountability
- 313 required samples

collected and turned into laboratory

- Completed 60 work orders
- IEPA inspection completed
- Flushed, inspected, and greased 804 hydrants
- Completed hydrant painting and coding

SEE PUBLIC WORKS PAGE 2



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Flood, continued from page 1

is turned back on.

Dietz said that at no time did the city fear it would be without water.

"We've kept a cushion of at least a day's worth of water, about 1/2 million gallons. It was being tested all week before the flood for any higher concentrations of nitrates from farm runoff. It didn't occur but to error on the side of caution, we issued a boil order just in case."

On Monday the city was waiting for 24-hour results from the lab and clearance from the IEPA. On Tuesday morning the boil order ended.

The mayor was grateful for the preplanning done by several agencies including Will and Grundy officials. The public was warned of potential flooding which he thinks prevented a bad situation from being worse.

"I am thankful to everyone in the community that came together over the last two weeks," said Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant. "Strong partnerships between all our local agencies helped to minimize the damage from flooding. I appreciate the hard work of the first responders, emergency management staff, and local officials during this challenging time."

Cleaning up

The motel may have suffered the most water damage. On Sunday several mattresses and pieces of furniture were piled up outside.

Nelson's Furniture the water level lapped the front of the building about six inches high. Store manager Kevin Webb said some water entered the building at its lowest spot soaking the carpet. Thankfully much of the furniture was spared although some recliners with electronics were being repaired.

"It could have been a lot worse. Thankfully the upper level of the building stayed dry," he said. "We expect to re-open by Thursday."

Nearby Nelly's Restaurant on Route 66 was high and dry, along with The Wine Cafe and Old School Brewing. They were re-opened by Sunday morning. The Wilmington House Family Restaurant was cleared to re-open Sunday. The water level got close but never entered the building.

Downstream watch

Grundy County EMA assisted Will County EMA by monitoring the County Line subdivisions and visually monitoring river levels leading up to the flooding.

Water did impact Phelan Acres (Will County) for the second time in two weeks. The earlier event caused residents to already evacuate or were very well aware and had contingency plans for any worsening.

Joe Schroeder, Director of Grundy County Emergency Management reported that aerial footage confirmed that the warm water siphons from the Dresden Energy Center cooling lake created a larger channel of water, allowing more ice to melt and water to flow. However, large portions of the river remain covered with solid ice into Wilmington.

As a precaution Kelly Road, West Blodgett Road, Phillips Road and River Road west had already been closed.

Schroeder reported that water and ice were flowing down stream all night Saturday until the jam at the County Line. At about 6:40 a.m., the ice jam broke free and a large amount of water and ice began pushing downstream on the Grundy County side. Nearly half of the width of the river was on the move. It moved pushing through the ice pack and water with haste. This movement took place until it got to the curve of the river along the Macintosh Subdivision (westend of Mallard Lane) and then came to stop once again. This did not result in any flooding on the Grundy County side.

This ice sat there with pressure building about 3.5 hours and began moving once again. In the 11:00 am hour the ice had pushed through on the Grundy County side all the way to the mouth of the Illinois River. At this time the Kankakee and Illinois River are free flowing water with ice chunks.

An American Red Cross emergency shelter was established at First Christian Church in Morris but went on standby Sunday. Anyone in need of emergency shelter due to flooding should call Will County EMA at 815-740-0911.

Will County EMA has launched a public reporting survey for residents and businesses to begin reporting any damages they may have sustained. These reports will support the efforts of damage assessment teams who are visually inspecting damage to personal property, businesses, and public infrastructure.

The residential and business damage assessment surveys can be found at: <https://www.willcountyema.org/flood>.

State of Emergency continues until Feb. 6

The City of Wilmington issued a State of Emergency Declaration on Friday morning due to flooding of the Kankakee River

The resolution allows city officials to act and make decisions beyond regular quorum while seeking financial assis-

tance from County, State and Federal agencies. Without the declaration the city says it does not have sufficient resources to respond accordingly to the flood event.

It grants the Mayor Ben Dietz extraordinary authority to respond to the state of emergency including the hiring of temporary workers, the rental of equipment, the purchase of supplies and materials, entering into contracts and agreements for the performance of public work as may be required to meet the emergency.

Attorney Meents files Doherty estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF
EUNICE CHARLOTTE DOHERTY,
Deceased; No. 2024 PR 24
CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Eunice Charlotte Doherty, Letters of Office as Independent Administrator were issued on January 26, 2024, to Stephen Krand whose address is 902 Judy Drive, Wilmington, Illinois 60481; whose attorney is Meents Law, P.C., 25158 West Eames Street, Unit A, Channahon, Illinois 60410. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, on or before August 8, 2024, or if mailing or delivery of a notice from the representative is required by Section 18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a Claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered by the claimant to the representative and to the attorney within ten (10) days after it has been filed.

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

Stephen Krand
Independent Administrator of the Estate of Eunice Charlotte Doherty, Deceased
Frank J. Meents
Meents Law, P.C.
25158 W. Eames Street, Unit A
Channahon, Illinois 60410
Telephone: (815) 534-9515
Facsimile: (815) 534-9516
Attorney Code: 06298859
Email: frank@meentslaw.com

Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, Jan. 31, Feb. 7 and 14, 2024.

Cooper named to dean's list

Ella Cooper, of Wilmington, was named to the fall 2023 Chancellor's and Dean's Lists in the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Arkansas.

Cooper joins more than 2,500 additional Fulbright College students on the fall 2023 dean's and chancellor's lists. To qualify for the dean's list, students must achieve at least a 3.75 grade-point aver-

age for the semester while completing at least 12 credit hours. To qualify for the chancellor's list, students must also achieve at least a 4.00 grade-point average for the semester while completing at least 12 credit hours.

"It's such a pleasure to recognize Ella for this spectacular achievement and for making Fulbright College and the University of Arkansas so

incredibly proud," said Kathryn Sloan, the college's interim dean. "Ella represents the very best of Fulbright College and demonstrates excellence in academics and a commitment to our mission of peace through education."

Ritchie Grain Elevator, Inc. gives notice of dissolving

PUBLIC NOTICE CLAIM NOTICE

Pursuant to 805 ILCS 5/12.75, Notice is hereby given that RITCHIE GRAIN ELEVATOR, INC. was dissolved on December 20, 2023. Any and all claims against the company, its members, employees, agents, or their transferees must be delivered to the Office of Frank J. Meents, Attorney for the company, Post Office Box 578, Channahon, Illinois 60410, on or before April 18, 2024. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred.

Frank J. Meents
Attorney for Ritchie Grain Elevator, Inc.
Channahon, Illinois 60410
Post Office Box 578
Telephone: (815)534-9515
Facsimile: (815)534-9516
Attorney No. 06298859

Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, Jan. 24, 31, and Feb. 7, 2024.

Triangle Mini Storage gives notice of disposal

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of Possible Sale and Disposal
To: **Shannon Dye, Melissa Escobedo, Bernadette Nealis, and David Humble**

Notice is hereby given that a possible sale or disposal of personal property will take place as allowed by the IL Self Storage Facility Act 770 ILCS 95.

This property includes household goods, furniture, electric scooters, and wheel-chairs.

It is in spaces 061, 084, 090, 093, and 408 at Triangle Mini Storage, 24616 W Stripmine Rd, Wilmington, IL 60481.

Potential sale will take place online.
Listing Date: February 9, 2024 12:00 pm
Ending Date: February 23, 2024 12:00 pm

Location: selfstorageauction.com
Auction IDs 328801, 328804, 382096, 382100, and 38102.

This notice is being given by Anthony Miceli of Triangle Mini Storage.
Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, Jan. 24 and 31, 2024.



Photo by Eric Fisher

A WILMINGTON SQUAD car blocks Highway 53 in Wilmington early Friday morning while flooding occurred along Bridge Street through the island parks. Water touches the front of Nelson's Furniture causing minor flooding inside the store. The nearby businesses including The Wine Cafe, Old School Brewing and Nelly's Restaurant on Route 66 remained high and dry.



Photo by David Quigley

THE VAN DUYN MOTEL was evacuated around 11 p.m. Thursday night as flood waters surrounded the property. Water in the mill race rose nearly three feet, overflowing onto Highway 53 and closing off the roadway for access across town. The river receded before noon on Friday and the street was reopened.

Public works, continued from page 1

- Lead Service Line Inventory revamped
 - Worked with Fire Department to complete ISO fire score
 - Re-zoning of water distribution system
 - PFAS samples collected per IEPA
- Other:**
- Public Works employees attended over 40 formal training/certification classes combined
 - Resurfaced 26,713 sq. yards of roads
 - Adopt-A-Highway Program Created
 - Completed North Island Lift Station Rehabilitation
 - Concluded Nutrient Assessment Reduction Plan Study
- Phase 2**
- Fire Alarm Replaced at WWTP
 - Water Reclamation roofing replaced
 - City Hall underwent drywall rehab, received a new floor, soft washed, parking lot sealcoated
 - Source Water Protection Plan completed
 - Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning produced and trained employees on Paver Software
 - IRTWA Energy Efficiency Assessment completed for Water and Wastewater plants

Lady 'Cats spikers win two over Elwood

Both the 7th & 8th grade volleyball teams won against Elwood in Thursday night's action.

Eighth grade won a close one 26-24, 26-28, 25-22. Serving was key with Caroline Smith having 8 aces, Amara Bown having 7, and Holly Eighner having 3. Bown also led offensively with 4 kills and a solo block.

Aubree Jandura led defensively with 5 digs to go along with her 1 kill and an ace.

The seventh grade Lady 'Cats won 25-22, 25-9. Again, serving saved the day with Peyton Adams and Nadine Liquid both having 5 aces and Aby Winker and Violet Turcany right behind them with 4 aces each. Turcany also added 2 kills.

PERSONAL INJURY

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher
Marney Simon, editor

February and floods, a historic combination

Floods on the Kankakee have been happening for thousands of years, but it wasn't until man started building things in the river bed that these ice jams became so overwhelming. And why February?



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

Because it's then that thawing starts, and the frozen river begins to break up. Five dams have been built across the river at various places previous to the concrete one that is in Wilmington now. All five were destroyed by ice, three of them only 4 months after they were built.

One of the most damaging as far as the Wilmington economy is concerned is the one in 1883. Hop on the way back machine and don't forget your boots. We read in the February 23, 1883 Wilmington Advocate; The scene in this city on last Friday night, when the water was at its height, was a vivid reminder of a like situation here in February, 1867, when the ice and water reached an altitude even higher than the freshest of last week."

"To begin with, on Friday morning the river was seen to be rising rapidly, causing no little alarm to those living between the depot and Burton's limekiln. At about 8 o'clock the westerly span of the big wagon bridge was carried off, and streams like Forked Creek and Jordan were swollen beyond their banks."

"Early in the evening the ice gorged at Stewart's flats and the water in the city rose with fearful rapidity. At eleven o'clock at night the merciless flood reached its climax, for then huge cakes of ice were heaved up on lower Water Street, removing houses from their foundations, surrounding the express office, and floating big piles of lumber in every direction at Allen's lum-

ber yard."

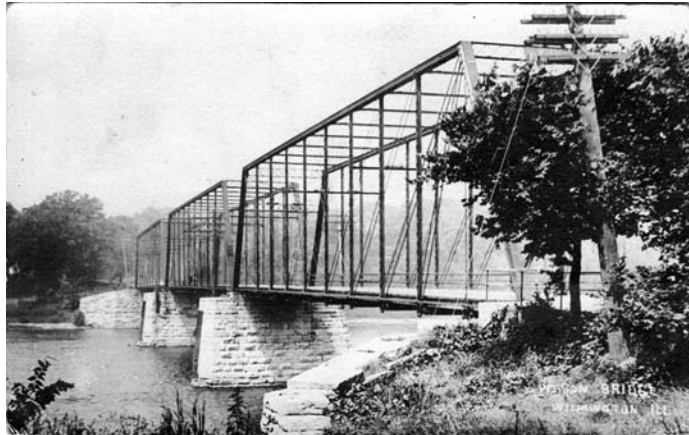
"Occupants of the houses on the Island took refuge upstairs for the time being, while big straw stacks, timbers, etc., floated down the river every few minutes. Dozens of lanterns flitted hither and thither in the moonlight, while scores of families hastily abandoned their homes and sought shelter with their neighbors whose houses were upon higher ground. At about 11 o'clock, however the great gorge of ice on the flats gave way and the immense body of water, which had then reached within a few feet of the railroad bridge, began to slowly recede, and from that hour the scare subsided."

The loss of the wagon bridge, the only way to cross the Kankakee, was devastating. A town meeting was immediately held to put forth a bond, borrowing the \$15,000 (about \$364,000 today) that a new bridge would cost. It of course passed immediately. However, the practical citizens had not understood the political aspect of the bridge.

Since Baltimore was a County road, some contended that the County Board of Supervisors would have to meet, get estimates, and put out bids for contract. The legal people of the County said that the new bridge fell into the jurisdiction of the highway commissioners. Others said that Wilmington and the County must go half and half with bids let out by a special commission yet to be named. A political nightmare if there ever was one.

The lack of transportation affected everyone. It was announced in the Advocate that,

"Miss Martin and Miss Robinson exchanged schools on Wednesday, owing to the last bridge disaster. The latter



Courtesy photo

A PICTURE IS the wagon bridge that was destroyed by ice in 1883.

named teacher resides on the west side, as also do the scholars of the former, whose ward school is on that side of the river."

Markert Brewery, located on the east side, found huge piles of cooked grain stacking up around their buildings. The prairie farmers used this by-product of beer making for cattle feed, especially just before they sent them to market. Most of the cattle farmers lived on the west side of the river.

The ad in the paper read, "Markert & Co. would say that in consequence of the bridge collapsing, they have a large quantity of cattle feed at the brewery, which will be sold at much reduced prices. Now is the time to buy."

In the mean time, the citizens took matters into their own hands and decided to build a ferry. It was announced on March 16, 1883; "The ferryboat will probably be in running order on Monday next. Its deck is 16 x 50 feet and the sides have railings. The craft was built by Messrs. Munro & Bogart."

At last a solution to the problem! But we read about the maiden voyage in the following week's paper and the news was not good.

"On Tuesday forenoon the ferryboat was put upon its trial trip after being boarded by

some fifteen persons. By some means, one rope got loosened when the boat was in the middle of the river, and the craft, swinging around so that her side was abreast the current, tilted on her side and sunk. Those on board were wet up to the knees or thereabouts, and were compelled to "stand by the ship" until another rope was dropped to them from the bridge, when the ferry and contents were pulled ashore."

This was not insult enough, but somehow the news of the ferryboat going down got on the telegraph wires but got sort of twisted around.

We read in the Advocate; "On Tuesday a rumor went all over the United States to the effect that a ferryboat sank at Wilmington, Illinois, drowning from eleven to fourteen persons. Telegrams poured into the Advocate from several metropolitan papers, including the New York Times, asking for full particulars, names of the victims, etc. The rumor without doubt appeared in the London, England papers of Wednesday. Thus has Wilmington fame thrust upon her."

It wasn't until October of 1883 that a new bridge was built, paid for jointly by the County and the City of Wilmington.

WHS Math team places forth in conference

BY LILY TURCANY
WHS STUDENT REPORTER

On Wednesday, Jan. 24th Wilmington High School attended the ICE Math Competition at Peotone High School. In attendance was WHS along with other schools from the conference.

Throughout the Math competition high school teams composed of students in varying grades take small Math tests based on their assigned subject. Students at all levels competed in eleven different tests. As a team, Wilmington High School received a total of 138 points and placed forth in the conference.

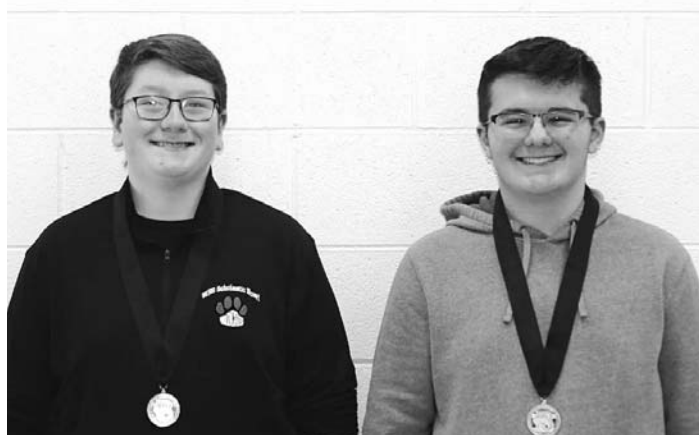
This hardwork led to receiving fourth place in the conference. Amongst WHS's Math team there were a handful of students who stood out. Two groups of students received medals by placing within the top three in the conference.

ference.

Receiving medals in second place for linear equations were Owen O'Donnell, Miley Swarengen, Gracie, Sally Clifford, and Morgan Farrell. In first place in level one comprehensive were Mark Gable and Hunter Lewis.

hensive were Mark Gable and Hunter Lewis.

As the WHS Math team continues to work hard they are preparing for their final competition of the season on March 1st.



HUNTER LEWIS (left) and Mark Gable competed for Wilmington High School Math team under the topic Level One Comprehensive. Both received medals by placing in the top three within the conference.



WHS MATH TEAM members (from left) Owen O'Donnell, Sally Clifford, Morgan Farrell, Gracie Wilkins and Miley Swarengen competed under the topic of linear equations. They received medals by placing within the top three in the conference.



BRAEDEN ANDERSON



BRENDAN MORAN

WHS seniors of the week

BY LILY TURCANY
WHS STUDENT REPORTER

Advice you would give to underclassmen? Stay motivated.

Brendan Moran

What do you plan to pursue upon graduation? Pipefitter.

What is your favorite high school memory? Running out of the woods.

What is one trend you wish you could get rid of? TikTok dancing in public.

What teacher or staff member has influenced you the most? Why? Mr. Farrell because he's the goat.

What is your favorite Wilmington tradition? Motorcycles in the tunnel.

What has been your favorite class? Why? Building trades because there's new tasks every day and it's rewarding when work gets done.

What has been your favorite extracurricular that you've participated in? Football.

What's your favorite thing on the lunch menu? Mac and cheese.

Advice you would give to underclassmen? Use the elevator at least once.

Each week the Free Press Advocate features members from the Wilmington High School class of 2024. This week we're featuring Braeden Anderson and Brendan Moran who completed our questionnaire.

Braeden Anderson

What do you plan to pursue upon graduation? Business or sports.

What is your favorite high school memory? Football.

What is one trend you wish you could get rid of? Procrastination.

What teacher or staff member has influenced you the most? Why? All of them (great teachers.)

What is your favorite Wilmington tradition? Motorcycle entrance.

What has been your favorite class? Why? Gym because it's fun.

What has been your favorite extracurricular that you've participated in? Sports.

What's your favorite thing on the lunch menu? Sandwich.

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Ella Endrst	Juliana Moats	Evynn Wilber
Carson Feehan	Kamille Morris	Rose Wolf
Timothy Feehan	Ash Nelson	Will Wolf
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Dr. Yerkes and staff would like to congratulate all the cavity free kids for the month of Oct. - Dec. Keep up the good work!

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Long underpaid

BRAIDWOOD—Once again, another oblivious author to how the city actually functions. First, Mayor Hart has and is giving more "heart" to this city that you may realize. Not only is she trying her best given the circumstances, lest we forget she lost her husband, Charlie while he served our city! So before you make that leap of ignorant faith, consider the field of mud Mayor Hart has already walked through yet you still want to keep her tied to the bumper. Secondly, the petition being "circulated" for the removal of the City Administrator has maybe 60 signatures. Maybe. Anyone can create fictitious accounts and add a signature. Not to mention 60 out of 6,200 is no where near a majority, therefore lacks the necessary weight. Third, the City Administrator has long been underpaid in this City. Yes, I said under paid. Only as of this year is the Administrator salary close to median. Surrounding towns of and even our 2nd state capitol, Vandalia, their administrators make more and are either stagnant or losing businesses. Administrators in nearby towns are paid \$130,000 and \$145,810, and the Vandalia Administrator \$117,710. Let's not forget Wilmington is losing its car dealerships to us, Coal City is going to have two vacant businesses with the move of Ultimate Rides. Those deals were secured while Tony made less than \$100,000. I think that bringing a couple million dollar businesses that will bring revenue and permanent infrastructure to the City is worth a bit of a raise, but that's just my two cents. As for the related employee, that salary isn't even set by the city. That's set by a union contract. And we should be so lucky that's what the salary is! If you had the workload that a Detective Sergeant has being the only investigator in the department by title plus all the administrative functions he has, any non-union employee would be screaming for a raise. So, with all that said, I would suggest you say less and learn more.

Quit making excuses

COAL CITY—Americans hate a fixed fight, be it in sports, their personal life, or in politics. Many people that I know think that the last presidential election was rigged. The years of poor performance out of Washington roves they were right. We have had to put up with weak leadership like never before and most people are sick of it. A strong leader is needed and the voters want a person who will treat current problems with courage and strength toward real solutions. The vote is all we have and we want it honest and reliable. Our freedom depends on it. We want the U.S.A. to be the land of the free and home to the brave, especially for our leaders. Each of us should do our best to make this world be a better place if we can. It is said that God helps those that help themselves. We must quit making excuses and find a good solution to the homeless situation. Business needs leaders who will not be pushed around by politicians. Every one in the world would be here if they could be so we need strong borders. We need the freedom to be free to do what is best for us. We all deserve ways to better places if our talents will get us there. It is supposed to be our own personal choice and not that of someone else. We are now boxed in by those in charge and this must change. We can save ourselves if we will. Well we? U.S.A. all the way!

Thanks for plowing

SYMERTON— Thanks for plowing. Many thanks for Wilton Center plowing the streets in Symerton. Good job Ray and Ryan Nugent for cleaning the streets in town by your bar.

Clearing snow

WILMINGTON—I'm a resident of Ward 2. Things have changed, I definitely live in Wilmington Township. I was thanking the township and Public Works for removing snow in such a timely fashion and keeping the roads safe. I have friends that use township roads and they are very grateful driving that there is no snow. I know everybody drives in the city appreciates the fact the streets are all clear. So what happens with grass and leaves I don't know. I was only thanking people for taking care of the roads with the snow. Sheri Michaels.

Not treated right

WILMINGTON—The building inspector didn't bother to go and take a look and see what was going on at Winchester Manor apartments. A lot of these tenants was born and raised here

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

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

lish these remarks the newspaper 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.

Submissions by email to: courant@fpnusa.com with "soundoff" in the subject line or 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. Mail comments to Sound-Off, 271 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL 60416 or 111 S. Water St., Wilmington, IL 60481.

and never left this city till this day who are tenants of Winchester Manor apartments and the disabled are also tenants. It's a shame the way the elderly seniors and the disabled are treated at Winchester Manor apartments by the new owners and the new management. I would like to know if the new owners and new management talked to Wilmington Public Library about their elderly seniors and the disabled. Some have animals coming to the Wilmington library from eight in the morning sitting there all day till 5:00 at night everyday until they get their apartments renovated and remodeled. It's a shame the way the elderly seniors and disabled are treated.

Less than half

WILMINGTON—Nikki Haley pointed out the fact that the Republicans have lost the popular vote in seven of the last eight presidential elections. The electoral college was established by the slave states as a condition of joining the union. It's function is to undermined the majority. So the Republicans should stop saying they represent the American people it's actually less than half which is why they hate Democracy and majority rule. Whether the issue is abortion, gun control, or LGBTQ rights the Republicans are on the wrong side of the polling. Trump saying he would be a dictator was at least honest for a change. Vote.

America's melting pot

COAL CITY—Every year different organizations come out with the happiest countries on the planet. It is almost the same list every year starting with 1. Finland, 2. Denmark, 3. Iceland, 4. Norway, 5. Netherlands, 6. Sweden, 7. Luxembourg, 8 Switzerland, 9. New Zealand and 10. Australia with the United States coming in at #16 (not bad). These top ten countries are the countries you liberals always point out and state that we should be more like them but they all have one glaring problem: They are almost 100% Caucasians goes as follows: Finland 92%, Denmark 91%, Iceland 95%, Norway 88%, Sweden 90%, Luxembourg 92%, Switzerland 90%, New Zealand 88% and Australia 86%. The United States is the only country in the top 20 that has any diversity at all with 58% Caucasian, 19% Hispanic, 13% African American, 4% Asian with the remaining 6% a mix of every ethnic group known to exist on the planet. We also have almost every culture and religion known to exist on the planet in this country. The top ten countries that you liberals just drool over don't even come close. So I guess the real message from you liberal hypocrites is that the United States needs to be more like the top ten happiest countries which means we need to have a higher percentage of Caucasians. How exactly do you plan to do that with 100,000's of illegal Hispanic migrants pouring over the border every month.

Pack up and leave

COAL CITY— Empty houses for sale. For those individuals wanting to purchase a home for the first time but are having trouble finding something they can afford, just wait until the November 5 election is over and Trump is back in the White House. The left-wing liberal Democrats will be leaving the country as fast as the illegal aliens are crossing the southern border. They always cry that if the election doesn't go their way they will pack up and leave the country. Boo-hoo poor liberal Democrats. Maybe this time you will make good on your promise, pack your bags and make the residents in some other country hate you. Anyway, there will be plenty of empty houses for sale at rock bottom prices.

Open borders

SHADOW LAKES—On the news it was stated that the president and the Democratic leaders are now concerned about the border crisis and the sanctuary cities have decided to turn off the welcome sign. But it is now an election year that brings out their concern since they have allowed the destruction for three years by allowing the southern border open for crime and drugs. These leaders want your vote and will promise anything. If there is a Democrat president again all their promises will go down the drain just like the promises that the rule of law must be obeyed.

Random thoughts

WILMINGTON—Rudy Giuliani recently filed for bankruptcy, meaning he won't have enough money to pay off the two Georgia poll workers he slandered. Here's a thought, Rudy. Keep your big lying mouth shut if you can't pay



the fiddler. Same for Trump whining about the \$83 million defamation case he just lost. Same advice. And for the local MAGAs, do you think Trump will pledge loyalty to Nikki Haley if she wins the Republican nomination or cry election fraud? Never mind. Stupid question.

Dog outlook

COAL CITY—There are a lot of dogs in Coal City. That is good.

Migrant love

WILMINGTON—Just asking, do Biden voters take in illegal immigrants that they love so much? Or is it love them, just not anywhere close to my home?

Life under Democrats

WILMINGTON—Do you know that in some states illegal immigrants can get a sex change for free while vets wait in line for health care?

Crisis is good

SHADOW LAKES—People read this carefully, because I am going to explain why the crisis at the border may never be solved among many reasons. First of all, the government doesn't want to solve the problem because of reality for the government. It's not really a problem, in reality. What it is, is a modern form of slavery. Yes, slavery benefits both the American people and the American government. Second reason, the politicians. The people that we elect are supposed to represent us. Those people don't want to solve the problem. It works really good for them come election time when they can blame each other for the crisis at the border. This is not an unsolvable problem, if the people in power wanted to they can solve this issue. So I want to explain modern form of slavery. You have millions of undocumented people living and working in the United States in deplorable conditions. Everything I'm saying here can be easily confirmed by anybody that knows how to do research. Look up American Farm workers and you will find that most of the fruits and vegetables that are produced in the United States are produced by undocumented workers who worked under deplorable conditions for pennies. People that do the cleaning in the restaurants, people that do the cleaning in the hotels and many other manual labor jobs are done by undocumented workers. They get paid next to nothing, a modern form of slavery. Also, some people make false statements that these people don't pay taxes. How can this be possible? They say they shouldn't send their kids to school because they don't pay taxes. Well aren't most of the school systems funded with property taxes? These people live somewhere, so if they own a house, I'm sure they pay property taxes and if they rent I'm sure their landlord pays property taxes. When they buy groceries and clothes do they get their stuff cheaper because they don't pay taxes? Nonsense, not only that for these people to get a job at a company or a business, they are required to show a Social Security number which in many cases it's a made up number that doesn't exist. The company deducts Social Security federal tax income and tax everything same like everybody else. Undocumented workers in the United States contribute billions not millions, billions of dollars every year to the Social Security administration and many cases they will never be able to claim any benefits. That is the reason why the government turns the blind eye to undocumented workers. When the Democrats are in power, the Republicans would do anything possible to stop them from doing anything that can help the border crisis and it's the other way around. Also when the Republicans are in power, the Democrats will do anything possible to stop them from doing anything to solve the problem because this way during election time they can blame each other

to gain votes from the American voter. So there it is plain and simple

What do we say?

BRAIDWOOD—Our nation has become the laughing stock of the world due to former President Trump. In New York a rape charge has just concluded and the case of hush money to a porn star will begin; in Manhattan, tax fraud will be ruled upon; in Georgia, racketeering charges relating to election fraud will be decided; in Florida, stolen national documents will be adjudicated; finally, the Federal Supreme Court will consider the insurrection to overturn our nation. What do we say? We say nobody's above the law. We say when you do the crime you do the time. We say no whimpering, no crying, no temper tantrums. Above and beyond all this, the democracy we have brought to so many people throughout the world may be wiped away here in our own land, the United States of America, due to the threat of a dictatorship promised by the same, former President Trump.

Getting worried

BRAIDWOOD— After reading soundoff the past couple of weeks, you can see an election is coming up. Since Chief Lyons announced he is running for mayor we will be seeing a lot more negative comments being put in soundoff. Someone in city administration must be worried about their job.

It's treason

COAL CITY—The Federal Government is now allowed to cut the razor wire on the U.S. Mexican border which means that our leaders in Washington, D.C. have become the leaders of illegal immigration and are going to continue to destroy the lives of the American citizens by allowing our taxes to be given to people that are not U.S. citizens. Taxpayers will wind up as poverty stricken people so that our leaders in Washington DC can collect more finances for their pockets and bring in everyone from around the world to take over U.S. jobs as they have also allowed foreign governments to buy up our farmland so foreign governments can control the USA food. Treason is the violation of the oath of office to protect the American citizens' lives.

With split tongues

DIAMOND—Closing the border is the only thing that should happen, but our leaders in Washington DC want the borders open. They speak about security being primary but this is a pure lie since they are stopping everything protecting the lives of Americans when all they care about is their own comfort. Our leaders in Washington DC have stated that the rule of law must be obeyed but they are talking out of both sides of their mouths with their split tongues like a poisonous snake in the grass.

Absolute impunity

WILMINGTON—Donald Trump said he had absolute immunity. Actually it's absolute impunity.

No longer free speech

WILMINGTON—A lot of people on the right think freedom of speech without consequences. You can say whatever you want but there just might be blow back.

They signed up

WILMINGTON—It is said that three soldiers were killed in Jordan but one must remember that these three voluntarily joined the military whose primary function is to kill people on behalf of the United States. Who would Jesus kill?

Snubbed by Academy

WILMINGTON—Barbie was snubbed by the academy because of the patriarchy. I guess like Ken, they're all smooth down there.

Letter to the Editor

Take Trump's threat to democracy seriously

To the Editor:

This month marks three years since the January 6 insurrection—a direct attack on our democracy, our freedom to vote, and a preview of how far Trump is willing to go to cling to power.

January 6th was the violent and deadly culmination of a months-long criminal conspiracy after the 2020 election, when Trump attempted to stop the peaceful transfer of power for the first time in American history.

But even as he faces multiple indictments for this criminal conspiracy he led, Trump is still running for president in 2024.

If elected to a second term, Trump pledges to weaponize the Department of Justice to seek

revenge against his political opponents, to pardon himself and his allies for crimes they commit, and to deploy the military against demonstrators exercising their First Amendment rights—all while purging the federal government of anyone who doesn't agree with him.

After seeing how far Trump was willing to go on January 6th, we should take these campaign promises seriously. Trump and his allies pose an urgent threat to our democracy, our fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. It's up to all of us to ensure they do not return to power.

Mary E. Variola
Wilmington

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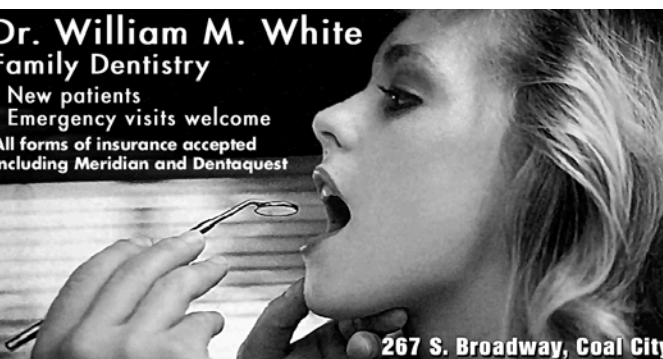
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Like it or not, migrant buses still coming

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson's budget that he passed last November deliberately underfunded programs for asylum-seekers. The meager appropriation could be exhausted by April, but nobody knows yet what the city plans to do when it reaches that point.

Also last November, Gov. JB Pritzker made it clear to reporters that, "the state doesn't run shelters," and said he was waiting for the city to recommend shelter sites.

"The state doesn't control property in the city of Chicago that could provide a location. The city really has to do that," Pritzker also criticized the city for not asking the General Assembly for additional money and noted, "we have spent much more money to support the system of asylum-seekers arriving here than the city has."

In December, the state declined to fund a huge, 2,000-bed tent shelter in the city's Brighton Park neighborhood after an evaluation of a city contractor's report by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency found that the remediation completed by the city "did not meet IEPA standards to receive [a formal



CAPITOL FACTS
Rich Miller

letter stating no more mediation was needed] and was therefore not approved," an IEPA spokesperson reiterated last week.

The city was furious at the denial, and Mayor Johnson complained to reporters again last week that the state still has not fulfilled its promise to open those 2,000 new beds.

The state claimed then and has ever since then that, despite repeated requests, the city has not yet offered up any more sites. Mayor Johnson told reporters this was not true. I'm still checking on this.

Also in December, Mayor Johnson announced a program to ticket and even impound buses carrying migrants to the city from Texas unless drivers followed rules for when and where their passengers could be dropped off.

That quickly had the effect of forcing the bus companies to dump their human cargo in the suburbs and exurbs, where they are then directed to public transportation to Chicago. During the week ending January 19, not a single bus from Texas arrived directly in Chicago, according to a document released to city officials.

The city has opened no new migrant shelters since

November, although Chicago officials made it appear as if they were still working on plans to do so in December, specifically a shelter on the city's Northwest Side at a site owned by the Catholic Archdiocese. Will Chicago still open and operate that shelter?

No. But the city has been hoping that the state and/or the Archdiocese could open it and now I'm hearing that the shelter might possibly go forward.

On January 12th, city officials went even further and told state legislators the city had "begun planning for right-sizing" its shelter system. That's corporate-speak for "downsizing," although a city official now says they probably shouldn't have used that word.

And then last week, Mayor Johnson told reporters that the state government "can build a shelter anywhere in the state of Illinois," adding the state "does not have to build a shelter in Chicago."

This, of course, ignores the fact that the migrants' stated preference is a Chicago destination. More importantly, it's also the politically targeted destination set by the Texas governor. In other words, the mayor can say what he wants, but they're coming regardless.

His comment also ignores the fact that the state has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on infrastructure and caring for asylum-seekers in Chicago. Expanding that out would be

prohibitively expensive and disperse scarce human resources.

There are only so many people who are willing to do the work and qualified to do it. Dispersing those workers throughout a large geographic area would make their task a lot tougher. It may be unfair to the city, but that's where the infrastructure is.

Not to mention that suburban mayors aren't exactly falling all over themselves to take any of these folks in. When a reporter asked Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle last week if any suburban mayors had taken up her offer to open shelters, Preckwinkle said, "Those conversations didn't result in offers of assistance."

It's becoming more clear almost every day that, despite his initial promises to welcome the new arrivals with open arms and share with them the city's "abundance," Mayor Johnson's aim for weeks, if not months, has been to pull back from the task of accepting and caring for the continuing influx of asylum-seekers and return to his progressive agenda, like banning natural gas connections in most new construction.

Meanwhile, April gets closer every day.

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

Mobile food pantry to visit Kuzma Cottage

Catholic Charities of Joliet will be hosting Mobile Food Pantry at Kuzma Care Cottage on Friday, Feb. 2, at 635 S. Main St., Wilmington from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

When you arrive, please line up in the St. Rose Church parking lot by entering on the Main Street side. (Please do not arrive before 9 a.m.) All Mobile Food Pantries will use a "drive thru" method to distribute food.

Please clear space in your trunk or backseat so volun-

teers can load boxes of food directly into your vehicle. Food is free to neighbors in need; no ID, proof of address or income is required. Everyone is welcome.

Food is distributed on a first-come, first served basis, while supplies last.

I-PASS switching to stickers

BY ZETA CROSS
THE CENTER SQUARE

Illinois drivers can now pay their I-PASS highway tolls with a smaller windshield sticker tag instead of the current plastic box transponder.

The compact blue and purple windshield sticker tags allow drivers to skip toll booth lines. A bar code on the sticker uses radio frequency ID to connect with toll collection technology.

Executive Director Cassaundra Rouse of Illinois Tollway says the sticker tags do the same job as the bulkier plastic transponders do.

"Sticker tags are a more convenient, reliable and less expensive travel experience for our customers," Rouse said.

Louisville, Atlanta, Denver and California have transitioned to sticker tags.

Wilmington Freemason's chili cook-off seeks entries

The Wilmington Freemasons Lodge #208 will be having their 14th annual Chili Cook-Off to fund the Pedals for Progress program on Sunday, Feb. 4 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Tasting and a bowl of house chili \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids over 11 and free for

kids 11 and under. There will also be \$1 hot dogs available.

Wilmington Masonic Lodge is located at 311 Main St., Wilmington.

Think you have what it takes to be the Chili King? Register to be a contestant. Call Ben Stickel 815-370-7331 or Matt Lohmar 815-210-9606.

Gardner Lions pancake breakfast

The Gardner Lions Club will serve breakfast at the Gardner American Legion Hall on Sunday, Feb. 4, from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.

The menu will consist of pancakes, sausage, eggs, toast, biscuits & gravy. The cost is \$9 for adults and \$5 for children ages 5-10. Children under the age of five will eat free.

Everyone is welcome to come out for a great breakfast, support the boy scouts and the Lions.

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Winners named in G-SW Dodgeball Tournament



TEAM NO HIT Sherlock won first place in the 5th/6th division in the Gardner Grade School annual dodgeball tournament that was held January 28.



GARDNER GRADE SCHOOL held its 2nd annual Dodgeball Tournament on January 28. The tournament had 19 teams ranging from grades 2-8. Area students from Braceville, Coal City, Dwight, Gardner, MVK, Reed-Custer, & South Wilmington were represented well in the tournament. All proceeds from the event will benefit the Gardner GS Outreach Program. First place for the 3rd/4th division was the Coalers.

Cardiologists discuss heart disease at free program

Individuals wanting to learn how to reduce their risk of heart disease are invited to a free program featuring Morris Hospital Cardiologists Dr. Mostafa Ghanim and Dr. Mary Menz on Thursday, Feb. 8, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Morris Community YMCA, 320 Wauponsee St. in downtown Morris.

The program is part of the Morris Community YMCA and Morris Hospital's new Healthy Happens Here health and wellness seminar series. To register, call the Morris Community YMCA at 815-513-8080, or go to www.jolietymca.org and enter "Heart of the Matter" in the search bar.

Forest Preserve's Four Rivers site to host wedding open house

When Bailey Testerman was first scouting for wedding venues, the bride-to-be said she was looking for a site that was as "green" as possible. "The health of our planet is incredibly important to me ...," she said. "I wanted to reduce the environmental impact of our wedding as much as possible. Choosing an environmentally conscious venue was a way to live out my values while wedding planning."

Testerman and her fiancé, Kole El-Talabani, of Kankakee chose the Forest Preserve District of Will County's Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon because of the venue's eco-friendly vibe, beautiful setting and all-inclusive wedding space. They were married Aug. 12 in an "eclectic" and "whimsical" celebration that incorporated many items from thrift shops.

Nestled in McKinley Woods preserve, the Forest Preserve District's Four Rivers is a popular wedding venue, but there are still some couples who aren't aware it exists,

said Mary Thomas, the site's reservation manager. That's why the Forest Preserve District will host a Four Rivers Wedding Open House from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 3, at Four Rivers to help more couples discover the venue. Registration for the open house is encouraged. Sign up on the Event Calendar at ReconnectWithNature.org.

The open house will highlight the Illinois River Grand Hall, which can seat up to 150 people, an outdoor patio, a picnic shelter suitable for outdoor ceremonies, and wedding suite, all in a beautiful setting in the woods near where the DuPage, Kankakee and Des Plaines rivers meet to form the Illinois River.

The building's unique interior also has exhibit space filled with a 2,000-gallon river fish aquarium, a mussel display and an oversized bird feeder/birdbath viewing area.

Five approved Four Rivers' caterers will be at the open house: Angeli's Catering, Chic Chef Catering, My Chef Catering, Polonia Catering and Uncle Bubs "Award Winning



BALLS OF STEEL won first place in the 7th/8th division of the Gardner Grade School Annual tournament on Sunday.

Letter to the editor Young people need a Hero

As a former teacher and school administrator, I had to deal with students who were troubled and had difficulty learning. These students often had poor attendance, behavior problems, or were tuned out in class. Usually, the standard recommendation to address these behaviors was counseling or therapy, which had some success.

However, we failed to realize that these students needed a "Hero," someone to listen to them and provide support. But most importantly, care about them and be there for them. A hero could be a teacher, administrator, coach, or neighbor â they are often located in a school, after-school program, government agency, or youth center. If you are aware of a young person who is dealing with depression, anxiety, or another emotional issue, please consider finding a hero or being one. We need more "Heroes."

Richard Trotta
Andover, MI

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OBITUARIES

Kenneth A. DeZee

WILMINGTON—Kenneth A. DeZee, 68, of Wilmington, formerly of Elwood, passed away unexpectedly on Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024 at his residence.

Born May 28, 1955 in Joliet, Kenneth Allan was a son of William and the late Philomena (Benco) DeZee. He was raised in Joliet where he attended St. Patrick Catholic School, and later graduated from Tremper High School in Kenosha, WI. Ken worked for Exxon Mobil oil refinery in Joliet as a process operator and served on the Mobil Fire Brigade for 35 years until he retired. He was a sociable guy who enjoyed spending time with his friends at the Wilmington VFW and Goose Lake Club. Ken was a great sports fan, especially of basketball and football, and also took pleasure in fishing and camping at the Yogi Bear Camp Ground in Amboy, IL. Above all else, he loved his family and treasured time spent with his children and grandchildren.

Survivors include his father, William DeZee, of Orangeville, IL and children: Heather DeZee, of Minooka; Jennifer DeZee, of Naperville and Jacqueline DeZee (William Russell), of Morris; one step-son, Ruebin (Julia) Conterez, of Carbon Hill; five grandchildren: McKenna,



Bre'Anna, Antonio, Carmine and Jaxson; four siblings: Deborah (Doug) Kohls, Margaret "Peggy" DeZee, Mike DeZee and Mary DeZee (Darrell Scaze); and numerous nieces and nephews.

Ken was preceded in death by his mother, Phyllis DeZee; his wife, Cressa DeZee and two brothers, Jacque and Billy DeZee.

Per his wishes, cremation rites are being accorded, and the family will receive friends for a celebration of life at the VFW Malcom J. Mayo Post 5422, 557 W. Baltimore St. in Wilmington on Thursday, Feb. 1, 2024 from 2 to 7 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Ken's memory may be made as gifts to the Wilmington VFW.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guest book, upload photographs, and share Ken's memorial page via social media at www.ReevesFuneral.com

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

Michele L. Krik

BRAIDWOOD—Michele L. Krik, 54, of Braidwood, passed away on Friday, Dec. 29, 2023 at Silver Cross Hospital in New Lenox, IL.

Born in St. Claire, MI, she was the daughter of the late Charles and Mary Ellen (nee Danser) Krik. She was a member of Trinity Lutheran Church Goodfarm in Dwight. Michele was a faithful woman. She worked in customer service and was very patient and kind with her customers. She enjoyed going out to dinner with friends and adored her pets. She was a devoted aunt to her nieces and nephews and took them on many outings. She will be dearly missed by all who loved her.

Surviving are her sisters, Debra (Dennis) Dean, of Naperville, IL and Cheryl (Randy)



Maca, of Lake in the Hills, IL; nieces and nephews: Elizabeth Rusnak (Jack Rowe), Joshua (Miranda) Maca, Kyle (Rebecca) Maca, Ethan (Deanna Fiejdasz) Maca, Nathan (Kristine) Dean, Michael (Bethanne) Dean and Jonathan (Qian) Dean; many great-nieces and great-nephews; as well as many beloved friends.

Preceding her in death were her parents, Charlie and Mary Ellen Krik.

Cremation rites have been accorded and a memorial service will be held on Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024 at 10 am at Our Savior Lutheran Church, 1910 Black Road, Joliet.

R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory, 401 E. Main St. Braidwood is in charge of arrangements.

Ronnie L. May

WILMINGTON—Ronnie L. May, 81, of Wilmington, passed away on Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024 at StoryPoint Senior Living in Romeoville, IL.

Born Feb. 22, 1942 in Chicago, Ronnie Lamont was a son of Lester and Florida (Noe) May. He gained his primary education in Coffeen, IL and went on to graduate from Hillsboro High School. On June 10, 1961, Ronnie married Janet Kay Headley in Vernon, and together they relocated to make their home in South Wilmington for four years before settling in Wilmington, where they spent the following 52 years.

Ronnie had a fulfilling career which began at the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant before he joined Mobil. He dedicated 30 years of service to Mobil/BASF before retiring. Ronnie was a member of the Wilmington Moose Lodge #241 and the Ponderosa Area Club. He was also a proud member of the Wilmington Lodge #208 A.E. & A.M.

Ronnie's true passion lied in the great outdoors. Fishing, hunting, boating and the search for morel mushrooms were activities he relished. His English Setter hunting dogs held a special place in his heart, even those that were not the best hunters. A St. Louis Cardinals fan by birth, Ronnie eventually converted to support the Chicago Cubs. Additionally, he played pool on leagues and had an affection for collecting - with garage sales being irresistible to him. Just taking leisurely drives around town to observe what was happening gave him contentment.

Ronnie will be remembered as a loving and supportive husband, father, grandfather and cherished friend to many. His kindness was genuine and his disposition always pleasant - qualities that earned him loyalty from all who knew him.



Survivors include his loving wife of 62 years, Janet; daughter, Carla (Glen) Hawks, of Tega Cay, SC; son, Kerry (Kathleen) May, of Plainfield; six grandchildren: Lucas (Lara) Hawks, Alison (Ricardo) Alvarado, Jessica (Trevor) Marshall, Travis Hawks, Kaitlin May and Jacob May; five great-grandchildren: Grayson, Hayden, Leah, Carter and Jace; one sister, Deanna (the late Kenneth) Traylor, of Hillsboro, IL; sisters-in-law and brother-in-law: Marilyn (the late David) Scott, of Corinth, MS; Diana (the late Gary) Foltz, of Patoka, IL and Sena (Harry) Landreth, of Vernon, IL and numerous nieces and nephews.

Ronnie was preceded in death by his parents; father-in-law and mother-in-law: Merle and Frances Headley and brother-in-law, Dale Headley.

Cremation rites have been accorded. The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd. in Wilmington on Thursday, Feb. 1, 2024 from 11 a.m. until the time of memorial service at 1 p.m. Inurnment will immediate follow in Oakwood Cemetery, Wilmington.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Ronnie's memory to the Alzheimer's Association for Alzheimer's and Dementia Research (www.alz.org) or to Lightways Hospice and Serious Illness Care (www.lightways.org).

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

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

Barbara Bailey

BRAIDWOOD—Barbara Gayle Bailey, 72, of Braidwood, passed away Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2024 at the ARC of Dwight, IL.

Born on April 8, 1951 in Montcalm, WV, she was the daughter of the late McKinley and Mae (nee Johnston) Blevins. She married James Earl Bailey on Oct. 10, 1967 and together they made their home and raised their family in Braidwood. She was a member of Main Street Baptist Church in Braidwood. For 35 years she was a school cook at Reed-Custer. Barb enjoyed playing buncos, gambling and loved to shop. More than anything she loved to spend time with her family including many visits to Florida.

Surviving are her daughters: Cathy Bailey, of Braidwood and Lori (Dustin) Johnson, of Diamond; granddaughters, Mariah and Molly Johnson, of Diamond; adopted grandson, Tim Gallagher and brother, Jonny (Zelma) Blevins,



of West Virginia.

Preceding her in death was her husband, James Bailey (11/18/2015) and brothers, J.C. Blevins and James Blevins.

Cremation rites have been accorded.

A Memorial Visitation was held on Thursday, Jan. 25. Barbara will be inurned with her beloved husband, Jim, at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Braidwood at a later date.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be directed to the family.

For more information and to visit her online guestbook, please log on to www.rwpatersonfuneralhome.com or find them on Facebook.

R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory were entrusted with arrangements.

Tammy Francisco

COAL CITY—Tammy Sue Francisco, 60 and a lifelong resident of Coal City, passed away Friday, Jan. 26, 2024 at Morris Hospital, following a valiant enduring battle with Marfan Syndrome.

Born July 3, 1963, in Joliet, Tammy Sue was the daughter of Carol Morin (nee Phillips), of Coal City and the late Leonard "Swede" Onsen. She grew up in Coal City and graduated from Coal City High School in 1981. She was a devoted mother to her son, Tony, and in addition cared about her nephews, Tiger and Cody. She owned a daycare business out of her home, and later joined the Coal City School District where she worked in the high school cafeteria. Tammy actively participated in the community and took great pleasure in supporting Coal City sports and school activities. With a passion for photography and drawing, she showcased her creative talents. Furthermore, Tammy was known for her exceptional cooking skills.

Tammy possessed an incredible capacity for love and displayed immense kindness throughout her life. She was blessed with countless friends who cherished her warm-hearted nature. Above all, Tammy held her family dear to her heart. Let us not forget Piper, her faithful canine companion.

Survivors include her mother and best friend, Carol Morin; one son and his fiancé, Anthony (Rose) Francisco, of Elmwood Park, IL; her brother and sister-in-law, Lenny and Carrie



Onsen, of Coal City; two nephews, Tiger (Jen) Onsen and Cody Onsen; one great-nephew, Griffin, and aunts and uncles: Mary (the late John) Manietta, William "Billy" Onsen (Dee Perona), Karen (Tommy) Summers, Betty (the late Raymond) Onsen and Pat (the late James) Onsen.

Tammy was preceded in death by her father who passed when she was 12; grandparents: Ervin and Jenny Phillips and Harold Onsen and Anna Bengie; her stepfather, Ronald Morin; aunts and uncles: Marilyn (Gerald) Krell, Joan Shumacher, Jerry Lee Onsen, Faye Legg, Betty Lou Vandygriff, Wayne (Dorothy) Onsen, Richard Onsen and David (Kathy) Onsen and cousins: Lori Grosvenor, Tiger Krell and Annette Onsen.

Per Tammy's wishes cremation rites have been accorded.

The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation at First Baptist Church of Coal City, 4470 E. IL Route 113, one mile west of Coal City High School, on Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024 from 10 a.m. until time of memorial service at 12 p.m. Pastor Sam Payne will officiate.

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

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

Barbara Ann Kurecki

MORRIS—Barbara Ann Kurecki, 85, of Morris, and formerly of Seneca and Burbank, IL passed away Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024 at Hinsdale Hospital in Hinsdale, IL.

Born Jan. 17, 1939, in Chicago, Barbara Ann was a daughter of Bruno and Frances (Manchik) Shimkus. She was raised and educated in Chicago and on June 16, 1956, Barbara married Ronald Kurecki at St. Brendan Parish in Chicago and he preceded her in death on Sept. 26, 1991.

Following her relocation to Morris in 1995, Barbara quickly ingrained herself within the community's fabric. She dedicated her time and efforts to First Christian Church, the Morris VFW Auxiliary, the Morris Hospital Auxiliary, and the Morris Moose Lodge #967. Her generous spirit and unwavering commitment reflected her deep-rooted values.

Barbara possessed a keen intellect and enjoyed challenging puzzles that she effortlessly conquered. She also took pleasure in playing Bingo and trying her luck playing slots, however it was in her kitchen where she truly expressed herself. Baking delightful treats was both an art form and a passion for Barbara Ann. It brought immense joy to her heart to share these delectable creations with friends and loved ones, especially with her daughters and grandson making holiday cookies and for their family cookoffs.

Survivors include her children: Karen McGovern, of Seneca; Kristine (William)



Grieger, of Lockport and Kimberly (Craig) Leary, of Morris; five grandchildren: James Railsback Grieger (Amanda Schoenecker), Shannon Bordeaux, Jared Kurecki, Alyssa Kurecki and Bradley Kurecki; five great-grandchildren: Michelle, Kendall, Madison, Maya, and Lexi; two sisters, Geraldine Wilkison and Sandra (Spencer) Waagen, both of Manteno; sister-in-law, Mary Kurecki, of Murphysboro, IL and numerous nieces and nephews, including special niece, Carrie (Jerry) Witherow.

Barbara was preceded in death by her parents and husband; son, Ronald Kurecki; one grandson, Michael McGovern; son-in-law, Jamie Railsback and siblings: Larry Reese, Robert Reese, Margaret Reese, Helen Reese, Dorothy Reese, Eugene Shimkus and Ronald Shimkus, Dolores Mikalauskas and Lorayne Hillig.

Per her wishes, cremation rites are being accorded, and the family will receive friends for a memorial visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd., in Wilmington on Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024 from 12 p.m. until the time of memorial service at 4 p.m.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guest book, upload photographs, and share Barbara's memorial page via social media at www.ReevesFuneral.com.

Cremation services and memorial arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory in Wilmington.

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Number 1

Time to Vote for Baby Valentine 2024!

The GFWC-IL Coal City Junior Woman's Club is hosting its annual Baby Valentine Contest. Contestants are babies and toddlers age newborn to 2-years-old. The contest is virtual only.

Photos will be posted in the Coal City Courant and on the GFWC-IL Coal City Junior Woman's Club Facebook page. Votes are .50 each and minimum online vote is \$1. Online voting will be open from February 1-10, 2024. Voting will end at 11:59 pm on February 10, 2024.

There will be a Baby Valentine photo album on our GFWC Illinois Coal City Junior Woman's Club Facebook page at the top of the page. **Submit payment via Venmo or Paypal and in the comment or**

notation section, please indicate what candidate you are voting for. Each candidate will have a number. Individual names will not be posted. The email address is coalcityjuniors@yahoo.com. If a contestant number is not noted, the monies will be distributed equally between candidates.

There will be prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. All contestants will receive a participation certificate which will be sent via US Mail to the address given in your email. All proceeds go toward community projects sponsored by the club. Contest winners will be announced in an upcoming edition of the Coal City Courant and the GFWC-IL Coal City Junior Woman's Club Facebook Page.



Number 2



Number 3



Number 4



Number 5



Number 6



Number 7



Number 8



Number 9



Number 10

Price under \$3 but gas may soon rise

Local gas prices remain unchanged from a week go as the statewide average has fallen 1 cent per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.19/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Braidwood stations were at \$3.19/g on Monday and Coal City averaging \$3.09/g. They were the exception as pricing in Wilmington (\$2.78/g), Morris (\$2.99/g), Bourbonnais (2.84/g) and Joliet (2.93/g) slipped under \$3.

The lowest price in the state on Monday was \$2.59/g while the highest was \$4.59/g, a difference of \$2.00/g.

Prices in Illinois are 15.7 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 46.4 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

"We've seen the national average price of gasoline bounce back up after cold weather

related refinery shutdowns pushed up the wholesale price of gasoline. Plus, recent GDP data and new attacks in the Red Sea have pushed oil prices to their highest level since November," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"While prices have inched up and may continue to slowly rise, I believe the larger increases will be witnessed in a few weeks as we enter mid-February, lasting through April or May, during which the national average could rise 35 to 85 cents per gallon. Other issues and tensions could complicate how quickly prices rise or how high they go, so while the rise is not completely charted, it could deviate from our expectations."

The national average price of diesel stands at \$3.87 per gallon.

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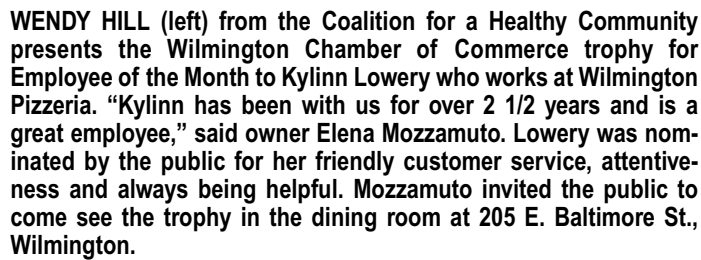
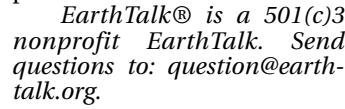
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Published in the Free Press
Advocate on Wednesday, Jan. 17, 24 and
31, 2024.

The Elwood Fire Protection District reserves the right to reject any and all bids. Any questions should be directed to Chief Locacius at clocacius@elwoodfpd.com.
Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, Jan. 17, 24 and 31, 2024.

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30. Type of horse
31. Diego
33. Defensive nuclear weapon
35. Most shrewd
36. It may be for shopping
37. Midway between south and southeast
39. A stock of foods
42. The bindings of books
43. Swiss river
44. Megabyte
46. Sammy , songwriter
47. Dutch colonist
48. Clare Booth , American writer
49. Sun or solar disk
50. Popular type of bread
51. Transfers of money (abbe.)
52. Association of engineering professionals
53. Young women's association
54. City
55. Niger-Congo branch of languages
56. Pointed end of a pen



CRYPTO FUN

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to organization.
 Each number corresponds to a letter.
 (Hint: 12 = E)

A. 4 19 14 24 18 2 22 12
Clue: Put into an order

B. 5 4 19 20
Clue: Cull

C. 3 2 26 12 5
Clue: Storage devices

D. 18 12 24 20
Clue: Orderly

Answers: A, organize B, sort C, files D, neat

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to organization.

T S M Y E S

Answer: System

Guess Who?

I am a singer born on January 29, 1982, in Indiana. I performed in theater groups, and moved to Los Angeles to pursue a musical career. I appeared on "American Idol" and went on to release an album that reached the top ten. I now tour with the rock band "Queen."

Answer: Adam Lambert

ORGANIZING WORD SEARCH

WORDS

- ATTIC
- BASEMENT
- BELONGINGS
- CATEGORY
- CHORES
- CLEAN
- CLOSETS
- CLUTTER
- DONATION
- FILED
- GARAGE
- GARBAGE
- HAZARD
- HOARDING
- LABEL
- MESS
- ORGANIZE
- PATTERN
- PROFESSIONAL
- SORTED
- STORAGE
- SYSTEM
- TASK
- THINGS

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WILDCAT SPORTS



Photo by Eric Fisher

A LEG UP on the competition worked out fine for Wilmington's Oakley Rivera who pinned Clifton's Blake Hemp in 3:43 on Thursday.

JV 'Cats place third, regionals up next

The fresh-soph Wildcats finished in third place during the IC8 JV Wrestling Invite held Saturday at Lisle. Wilmington (79) followed Coal City (108) points and Herscher (88) with one champion, two seconds, two thirds, a fifth and a sixth.

Winning first place at 175 pounds was Sylas Riedstra (7-3) who pinned all opponents. Riedstra started with a 1:06 fall over Jimmy Watson (Reed Custer) then nailed down Frankie Diaz (Peotone) with a 1:30 fall. She advanced with a 1:54 fall over Angel Farias (Peotone) and 2:57 pin against Barnabus Rivera (Coal City). In the championship she stuck Kyle Odam (Coal City) in 2:36 to end the impressive day.

At 126, Travis VanDuyne (19-13) placed 2nd by going 3-1. He started by outscoring Owen Duay (Herscher) 5-1. VanDuyne then pinned teammate Lucas Vance (Wilmington) 0-9 in 1:11. In round 4 he lost a 10-5 decision to Brady Anders (Manteno, 4-0). He then capped the event with a 2:25 fall over Noah Castro (Lisle) to claim second place.

The other second place winner for Wilmington was 150-pounder Aiden Morenberg (14-11). He lost the opening match to Mohammed Abunijmeh (Peotone) 14-9 by 2:20 fall. He bounced back in round 2 with a :43 fall over Evan Romano (Wilmington) 4-10, followed by a :36 pin against Landon Richardson (Reed Custer, 1-4). He nailed down second place with back-to-back pins of 1:12 over Zohaib Khan (Lisle) and :35 over Josh Martin (Coal City).

Third place was awarded to Sean Couch (132) and Tyler Nelson (138).

Couch (3-9) lost his opener to Kayden Budimir (Manteno)

by fall 1:36. He recovered with a 1:49 fall over Michael Furmanski (Lisle) but got side-tracked by Enzo Mugnolo (Coal City) who pinned him in 3:00.

Nelson (2-6) was pinned by Braedon Pfeiffer (Herscher) in 3:44 and Cody Rodriguez (Peotone) in 3:49. He got redemption with a :25 second fall over Avi Strole (Herscher).

At 126, Lucas Vance placed fifth after giving it his best in four matches. Vance was pinned in all his losses but still kept his head up knowing he was in a tough weight class.

At 138, Hunter Johnson (5-10) also placed fifth after getting pinned four times.

At 150, Evan Romano (4-10) placed 6th after losing five matches.

Clifton (Central) 43, Wilmington 27

It was a special night Thursday as nine Wildcat seniors were honored before the match against Clifton Central. It was double special as the Mighty 'Cats wrestled on one match while the varsity 'Cats were on the other.

Wilmington couldn't get by the Comets even though they had pins by Landon Dooley, Oakley Rivera, Parker Adams and Will Wilson.

106: Double Forfeit
113: Beau Williams (C) by forfeit
120: Landon Dooley (W) over Hayden Husch by fall 1:27
126: Oakley Rivera (W) over Blake Hemp by fall 3:43
132: Kayden Cody (C) over Blake Adolfo (W) (MD 19-11)
138: Evan Cox (C) over Brandon Adolfo (W) (TF 16-0 0:00)
144: Giona Panozzo (C) over Aiden Morenberg (W) by fall 1:04
150: Gianni Panozzo (C) over Matt Swisher (W) (MD 11-3)
157: Chris Andrade (C) over Evan Romano (W) (Fall 0:45)
165: Parker Adams (W) over Maxwell Joseph (C) (Fall 1:32)
175: Will Wilson (W) over Izzy Alvarez (C) (Fall 2:28)
190: Logan VanDuyne (W) over Hunter Hull (C) (Dec 6-4)
215: Brody O'Connor (C) over Andrew Dedo (W) (Fall 0:37)
285: Noah Gomez (C) over Brody Benson (W) (Fall 0:56)

The Wildcats will host the regional on Saturday starting at 9 a.m.



Photo by Eric Fisher

MIGHTY CAT JJ Dziuban (left) helps fellow Mighty Cat Hank Alberico adjust his headset during last week's special wrestling night with the Wildcats.

Mighty 'Cats bring home some first places

Wrestling is a long and grueling season but the Wilmington Wrestling Club is putting in the work. The team attended tournaments on Saturday and Sunday but not all could make it both days.

On Saturday, Jan. 27, there were 15 Cats that competed at the Elite Tournament in Orlando Hills. There were five that competed for first place while Len Morgan placed second in a competitive match. Clayton Crutchfield battled, Lodi Morgan was slick, Declan Wilking bashed and Jenna Alsbury dominated to take home first place.

Not to skip the third place matches but Aiden Wilking and Laura Allen lost tough first round matches but battled back with a dominant performance to place fifth. Ben Phillips, Carson Alsbury and Scarlett Kaniewski walked away from the boneyard with tough third place finishes.

The day was demanding for all wrestlers and the Mighty Cats that finished in fourth place had felt every bit of it and gave it their all. Those that walked away with fourth are Maddux Morgan, Maleya Campbell, Swayze Campbell, Deacon Deninger and Kyler Murphy.

Then the crazy coaches get up and drag the team to Joliet West H.S. with 35 of their wrestlers attending. As coaches see the good, the bad and the ugly there are those kids that always make them smile because they do and they

enjoy it no matter what. Sophie Burke is that wrestler that enjoys the sport and works hard and always smiles. Just as our sixth place finishers Lane Rossi and Marcus Guzman.

Laura Allen and Matt England had tough first matches but won out in incredible fashion to land in fifth place. Fourth place finishers were Liam Guttosch, Isaac Gorski, Mike Sims, Reed Rossi, Giovanni Land and Louie Gaspar.

Prayers to Avery Holeman after a tough day taking third by an ambulance ride at the end (she is doing well, tough kid and has a great heart).

Hank Alberico and Eli VanDuyne had a great day taking third along with Wyatt Witvoet, Max Holeman, Jenna Alsbury, Jacob Deane, Easton Wingerter, Kyler Murphy, Clayton Crutchfield and Ben Phillips.

Then there were 13 competing for that number one spot. It's hard for some when they work so hard but place seconde. It was still an impressive day taking second by Daniel Morelli, Maddux Morgna, Sonny Bongiovanni, Eli Kerr, Deacon Deninger and Mason Holeman.

Those that walked away as the Hammer Champs were Scarlett Kaniewski, Gannon Lundberg, J.J. Dziuban, Aiden Wilking, Lodi Morgan, Declan Wilking and Len Morgan.

Great way to finish off the weekend.



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Photo by Eric Fisher

WILDCAT RYAN NELSON drives the lane against the Clifton Central Comets during Friday nights game. Nelson led the Cats with 16 points and 12 rebounds.

Wildcats win thriller over Clifton Central

The Wilmington boys won a thriller on Friday, beating Clifton Central in overtime, 53-47, to improve to 11-6 overall.

The Wildcats were up 32-25 after three quarters of play when the Comets went on a 14-7 run, including some three-pointers, to tie it at 39-39.

In overtime, the 'Cats hit a couple of three-pointers, including one by Lucas Rink, to go up 46-41. With less than one minute left Clifton closed to within four points, 50-46, before Reid Juster sand a pair of free throws, followed by a two-pointer by Kyle Farrell, to win it.

Ryan Nelson out-muscled the Comets in the paint, grabbing 12 rebounds to finish with 16 points. Juster was a presence too, scoring 15 points while pulling down seven rebounds and three steals.

Rink launched three treys to finish with 11 points and seven rebounds. Farrell chipped in with five points while Ryan Kettman and Jake Castle had three each.

The 'Cats played Monday at Reed-Custer (which they won), Tuesday at Coal City before hosting Lisle on Friday.