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Vol. 50, Issue 11

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2024

A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER (815) 476-7966



DONALD UTKE SHOWS off his artwork and his 120-gallon aquarium, home of river fish.

Leatherwork artist creates his own version of Disneyland

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

Donald Utke, 71, is a talented leatherwork artist. But, his art is only a single facet of the extraordinary life he managed to carve out for himself after a devastating loss.

Though Utke lives in Wilmington, the way to his home is full of twists and turns through forests and over gravel and dirt roads. By the time you find his house, you'll swear you've somehow been magically transported to a wild frontier in The Yukon.

Arriving at his home does nothing to dispel the illusion. Homes sit atop a hillside overlooking the Kankakee River. Seeing a grizzly fishing for

salmon wouldn't be particularly surprising if this were land much north.

Utke's standing there perusing the content of his mailbox. He's a tallish thin fellow with the intense expression of a true artist. He sees the world differently from the rest of us.

Utke leads the way down a stone path. His chickens emerge from the cozy hen house to greet Utke. Five plump chickens, a couple Rhode Island reds and some aristocrat fancy hens, cluck contentedly.

You get the impression that the hens are "friends, not food."

"This was my grandmother's house," Utke says. "I've

been in the area, though not always in this house, my whole life."

Ferocious barking issues from Utke's front porch. Two Silky Terriers are yapping up a storm, warning trespassers not to do something that will get them eaten. Though they make a valiant attempt to appear fierce, the furious wagging of their tails gives them away.

In addition to being an artist, Utke is an animal lover, and he adores his pups as well as the winged and finned denizens of his household. They return the sentiment.

In the background, the Kankakee River meanders by peacefully, as if it hadn't attempted to drown everyone back in January.

"Never got flooded here," Utke says. "This isn't a flood zone, if you can believe it."

Utke's home is compact and charming, like a woodland cabin. Still, there's more than enough room for one human, two Silky Terriers, a school of tiny blue gill, a crawdad, and a bashful catfish.

A 120-gallon aquarium that houses river fish is the focal point of Utke's home. He relies on his river creatures for inspiration, and indeed, many of his leatherwork pieces feature fish.

"There's also a catfish in there," Utke says. "He hides behind the rock formation in the back."

Sure enough, a bewildered creature peeks out from behind a rock before wiggling deeper into the aquarium.

A riot of color

A virtual kaleidoscope of every shade and nuance of color fills Utke's cabin. A fountain, holiday lights, crystal, and quirky gnome figurines add a touch of whimsy. Most impressive are the hundreds of leatherwork projects that cover every vertical (and many horizontal) surfaces of his home. It's like living in a circus tent or carnival. Everywhere you look there's another masterpiece.

"This is my Disneyland," he says, smiling. "All this color makes me happy."

From handcrafted saddlebags to fanciful fish to mystical and mythical creatures, Utke's home is transformed into a magical place. Even his more whimsical pieces have depth.

Due to the sheer volume of work, it appears Utke has been turning out artwork for decades. But, that isn't quite the case.

Hoping for happily-ever-after

Utke graduated from Wilmington High School in

Fate of the Gemini Giant to be decided

Time may be running out for Wilmington's famed Gemini Giant.

As of late yesterday, there was a bid of \$65,000 for the giant on the Grafe Auction website (grafeauction.com/event/the-launching-pad).

Since 1965, the Gemini Giant has been Wilmington's claim to fame on the Route 66 Corridor.

The mystery bid strikes fear into the hearts of a score of Wilmington residents. They fear the giant, after 58 years of standing sentinel at The Launching Pad in Wilmington, may be whisked away to an unknown location.

The auction is suppose to end today (March 20) and as of press time, the fate of the giant was still unknown.

The owner of the fiberglass statue posted on social media said that unless \$100,000 was big, the giant would be destroyed.

Since that post individuals and organizations have been trying to raise funds through outright donations, a bar crawl, hot dogs and bake sales, T-shirts and more.

Ryan Jandura, who has lived in the Wilmington area for nearly 15 years, took action on Feb. 25 in a bid to save the Gemini Giant. He created a GoFundMe account (gofundme.com/f/save-the-gemini-giant-rt-66-land-

mark), with the goal of raising \$100,000 to purchase and relocate the 30-foot giant to an alternate location in town.

A contributor, Adam C. Mutsch summed up the going sentiment on Jandura's GoFundMe page.

"I hope it gets relocated to a better place in the town and remains a landmark for all visitors and Wilmington residents to enjoy in the future," he wrote.

Meanwhile, Wilmington VFW Post 5422 joined in the fundraising campaign to buy the Gemini Giant. If successful, the VFW will relocate the statue to its property at 557 W. Baltimore St., where it would remain in Wilmington and on Route 66.

Jandura and the VFW 5422 joined forces to rescue the Gemini Giant. As of Tuesday, combined efforts have raised \$33,768. Funds will be returned if the campaign is not successful.

Contact Ryan Jandura at savethegiant66@gmail.com or the VFW at 5422Heritage@gmail.com for more information.

The Grafe Auction website also included tables, stools and food processing equipment from the former restaurant. The big question now is did a higher bid come in at the last moment?

April named Senior Citizens Month

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

Wilmington City Council is recognizing April, 2024, as Senior Citizens Month in the city of Wilmington.

Mayor Ben Dietz signed a proclamation on March 5 to that effect.

At the March 5 city council meeting, Sheryl Puracchio of the Wilmington Rotary Charitable Foundation asked council members to officially recognize April as a month to honor our senior population.

Senior Citizens Month honors the city's mature population for the value and contribution they bring to home, family and society as a whole.

According to AARP, nationwide, close to 30 percent of volunteer hours were accounted for by 65-plus population.

In Wilmington, the percentage of senior volunteers at Kuzma Care Cottage, a food bank and source for practical assistance, is a whopping 93 percent.

Seniors are also active as volunteers at local churches. Betty Linke, 85, is in charge of the Community Senior Lunch at the United Methodist Church in Wilmington, where, seniors are offered lunch the second and fourth Wednesday of each month.

"You show up, you sign in and we'll feed you," Linke said.

There is also an increasing trend of older workers who remain in the workforce. Pew Research that the number of Americans ages 65 and older has nearly doubled in 35 years.

The proclamation dovetails with plans for a senior survey designed to gain insight into challenges faced by older adults in areas of technology, transportation, housing and more.

Once data from the survey is interpreted, a committee will determine how to apply for funding and obtain necessary resources and services and to connect with the senior population.



Courtesy Photo

DONALD UTKE CREATED his own Disneyland, covered with his leatherwork and quirky figurines.

SEE LEATHERWORK PAGE 2



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Leatherwork, continued from age 1

1972. Long before that, something about leatherwork inspired him.

"I think it was a seventh grade shop class," he says. "One of the classes was leather working, and I found I had a special talent for it."

Overall, Utke was a bright student. He especially excelled at sports and shop. Photos of Utke water skiing on the Kankakee River adorn his walls.

After high school, he worked as a machinist at Caterpillar. It wasn't long before he met and married, Lynne, the love of his life. Though Utke is a man's man, as he carried his new wife over the threshold of the cabin, he truly believed they'd live happily ever after.

The days turned into months and years, and two sons were born. They inherited their father's love of animals, nature, and the Kankakee River. Their lives flowed much like the river.

As he and Lynne grew older, Utke found himself looking forward to an idyllic retirement, with long, lazy days stretching out to eternity. They wouldn't even need to travel to exotic locations, with paradise in their very own backyard.

However, it was not to be. In 2008, Lynne passed away, leaving a sense of emptiness in his soul. His job kept his mind off of his sorrow, but once he retired he found himself alone with his grief. He'd stand staring out at the indifferent river, wondering what to do with the rest of his life.

Finding color in a gray world

Without his wife, Utke's life was gray. He longed for color. One day, he remembered how he'd loved leatherwork back in junior high.

In 2012, Utke found a brand new purpose. He would create his own color.

"I bought my first sheets of leather, and took to it like a fish to water," Utke says. "You go to the state fair and you see leather work stalls all these belts hanging are all made by machines. Every piece I've done is by hand, every paint stroke and every stitch."

Though the hundreds of handcrafted items Utke has created would go for some pretty big bucks, he's not interested in selling.

"I wouldn't mind teaching people to do this," he says. "But, I've never sold anything; I don't know how I could part with any of my leatherwork."

As Utke prepares to demonstrate his art, the blue gill and catfish swim over to watch. He sits at his table and lovingly rubs a hand over his latest project.

"See, you take a raw piece of leather," Utke explains. "You trace the pattern when on a clear filament. Then you wet the leather and then you trace the pattern. Then you use all the tools to carve."

Some of the artwork is traced onto the leather, but he also sketches freehand, making his creations truly one of a kind.

Though there's a bit of nip in the air, both the front and patio doors are open. The cabin is flooded with the promise of spring. Soon, Utke and his son, who lives next door, will be out on the river, jetskiing, fishing, or simply taking in the beauty of nature.

Meanwhile, the story of his life, and his purpose for being alive, is spelled out all around him. From his very first creation to the latest masterpiece, is a testament to his determination to create color when his world turned gray.

Easter Egg Hunt moved to WHS

BY LILY TURCANY
WHS STUDENT REPORTER

The Wilmington Lions Club is planning its annual community Easter Egg Hunt from 1 to 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 23 on the high school grounds.

With recent flood damages the location will be moved to Wilmington High School soccer field.

The Lions Club, Wilmington girls' soccer team, and Wilmington National Honors Society will be com-

bining forces to assure a great time is had by all.

The Easter Bunny will hide eggs throughout the field, and participants will have the opportunity to camouflage with face paint in preparation for the search.

The soccer team will lead activities to get the kids warmed up for the hunt. The Easter Bunny will be there to take pictures with children and families, as well.

Over 400 kids are expected to celebrate this Easter tradition.

Spring break camp at the Wilmington Park District

The Wilmington Park District will be hosting a Spring Break Camp March 25-29, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Kids will enjoy five days filled with fun and engaging

activities including bowling and a movie at the Mar Theater.

Register by visiting the park district website.

Attorney Meents files Reid 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
WILLIAM HENRY REID, Deceased;
No. 2024 PR 118

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of William Henry Reid, Letters of Office as Co-Executors were issued on March 4, 2024, to Tad L. Petrie, whose address is 3310 Jasons Way, Marion, Texas 78124; and Tamara A. Lambert, whose address is 1521 Jones Street, Joliet, Illinois 60435; whose attorney is Meents Law, P.C., 25158 W. Eames Street, Unit A, Channahon, Illinois 60410. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, on or before September 16, 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.illinoislegalaid.org.

Tad L. Petrie and Tamara A. Lambert
Co-Executors of the Estate
of William Henry Reid, 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
E-mail: frank@meentslaw.com
Published in the Free Press
Advocate on Wednesday, March 13, 20
and 27, 2024.

Attorney Meents files Raridon 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
DELL RARIDON, JR., Deceased; No.
2024PR108

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Dell Raridon, Jr., Letters of Office as Independent Executor were issued on March 6, 2024, to Linda J. Raridon-Duke, whose address is 24141 S. Iroquois Drive, Channahon, Illinois 60410; whose attorney is Meents Law, P.C., 25158 W. Eames Street, Unit A, Channahon, Illinois 60410. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, on or before September 16, 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.illinoislegalaid.org.

Linda J. Raridon-Duke
Independent Executor of the Estate
of Dell Raridon, Jr., Deceased

Frank J. Meents
Meents Law, P.C.
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E-mail: frank@meentslaw.com
Published in the Free Press
Advocate on Wednesday, March 13, 20
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Photo by Lily Turcany

WOMEN OF WILMINGTON recently awarded scholarships to these WHS students so they can attend leadership conferences. They include (from left) Logan VanDuyne, Alyssa Chiapetta, Remington Thomas, Aiden Poulos and Ava Spicer.

Women of Wilm. award HOBY scholarships

BY LILY TURCANY
WHS STUDENT REPORTER

Every year the Women of Wilmington pay for WHS students to be able to attend various summer programs.

This year the Women of Wilmington are sponsoring a handful of sophomores to attend the HOBY Illinois-Central South conference. The HOBY curriculum is based off the Social Change Model of Leadership.

Their program stands for personal, group and service leadership. Students begin by reflecting on their own leader-

ship skills and values. Then students use that knowledge about themselves to work within a group.

Finally, with these new-found skills students learn how to apply themselves to solve problems in their own community! HOBY explores issues related to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The Women of Wilmington are sponsoring five sophomores with over \$1,500 to attend the HOBY leadership conference.

After careful considera-

tion by seven staff and club members, five deserving sophomores were chosen. The include Aiden Poulos, Logan VanDuyne, Alyssa Chiapetta, Remington Thomas and Ava Spicer.

These are not the only scholarships that the Women of Wilmington offer! They typically award four to five students to attend a leadership seminar which costs up to \$395 per student.

During her junior year this reporter was sponsored to attend the World Affairs Seminar, one of the most inspirational events during my school years. They will soon be

awarding it again, along with a \$1,000 scholarship for to a WHS graduate to attend college.

The dedicated local women's organization have also sponsored students to attend music camps, which are approximately \$600 each.

Women of Wilmington generate their funds from vendor fees paid by vendors for the Catfish Days craft and flea market. They are proud to support students who attend academic or leadership camps throughout the school year.

Low-interest loans available to individuals, business damaged during January flood

Homeowners and businesses affected by flooding caused by ice jams along the Kankakee River can now apply for loans through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

The flooding occurred Jan. 15 to Jan. 25 causing damage to more than 55 homes near the river that suffered significant damage. They and other businesses may be eligible to apply for low-interest disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

For these and others who experienced flood damage, interest rates are as low as 4 percent for businesses, 3.25 percent for nonprofit organizations, and 2.688 percent for homeowners and renters, with terms up to 30 years. Loan amounts and terms are set by the SBA and are based on each

applicant's financial condition.

The SBA has made the loans available in response to a letter from Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker on March 8 requesting a disaster declaration by the SBA. The declaration covers Will, Grundy and other affected counties.

To assist affected businesses and residents, the SBA has opened a Disaster Loan Outreach Center (DLOC), at the Wilmington Lion's Club, 805 River St., Wilmington, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and Saturdays from 10 a.m. through 2 p.m. through 4 p.m. through Friday, March 29.

Customer service representatives will be available to answer questions and help individuals complete their applications. Businesses and private nonprofit organiza-

tions may borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace disaster-damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory and other business assets.

For small businesses, the SBA offers Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDLs) to help meet working capital needs caused by the disaster. Economic Injury Disaster Loan assistance is available regardless of whether the business suffered physical property damage.

Loans up to \$500,000 are available to homeowners to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate. Homeowners and renters are eligible for loans up to \$100,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property.

Applicants may be eligible for a loan amount increase of

up to 20 percent of their physical damages, as verified by the SBA for mitigation purposes. Eligible mitigation improvements may include a safe room or storm shelter, sump pump, French drain or retaining wall to help protect property and occupants from future damage.

Applicants may apply online and receive additional disaster assistance information at SBA.gov/disaster. Applicants may also call SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email DisasterCustomerService@sba.gov for more information on SBA disaster assistance.

The filing deadline to return applications for physical property damage is May 13, 2024. The deadline to return economic injury applications is Dec. 13, 2024.

Students sought for paid city internship

For the second year in a row, the city of Wilmington is offering internship opportunities to high school and college students 18 years of age and

older, who have a positive attitude, high moral and ethical standards and be open to mentoring.

The city is planning to hire two students to serve in the areas of economic development and operations and utilities. The internship will pay \$15.50 per hour and runs from Monday, June 10 through Friday, Aug. 9.

Candidates must have experience with Microsoft Office and Google Suites. The city is looking for self-starters able to work in a fast-paced environment and possess critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Interns will have the opportunity to interact with city officials and civic leaders, while helping the city deliver service to neighborhoods and

residents.

Students will learn about public service, improve writing skills and gain insight and experience in local government.

According to city administrator, Jeannine Smith, last

year's internship program was a great success and the city is looking forward to this year's program.

Deadline to apply is before March 29. For information contact the city of Wilmington at (815) 476-2175.

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher
Marney Simon, editor



The Free Press Advocate

USPS No. 307-450

Published weekly, 52 times a year, on
Wednesdays by
G-W COMMUNICATIONS, INC.,
111 S. Water St., Box 327
Wilmington, IL 60481
Periodicals postage paid at Wilmington, Illinois

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Free Press Advocate,
111 S. Water St., Wilmington, IL 60481.

Subscription rates: \$43 Grundy & Will counties; \$50 other Illinois counties and \$57 out of state

Citizen's arrest! Citizen's arrest!

As you know, I am a big fan of old westerns. And in many of them the sheriff calls out a posse and the citizens of the town become deputies. I had the thought that this was probably unrealistic.

Today if an outlaw needed chasing, I could not imagine the police chief throwing a citizen a gun and saying "Come with me!" The response would no doubt be "Say, what!" But it seems that I was wrong. Let's climb aboard the way back machine for a few examples.

Our first example comes from July 28, 1854, very early in our town's history. Note that the man named Lyons was just a passer-by and was called on to become part of the posse.

At first it was reported in the Joliet Signal as follows: "A man named Welch was killed at Wilmington, in this county, by Joseph Lyons, of that place. An officer had arrested a friend of Welch for an assault, and Welch, being under the influence of liquor, made an attempt to rescue him from the hands of the officer when Lyons was called upon to interfere, which he did by striking Welch on the head with a spear, killing him instantly."

Sounds like a clear cut case of a citizen interfering with a police matter doesn't it?

Well, as with most things the rumors did not get it right. The following week the Joliet Signal printed the real story with an apology.

"Last week, we gave an incorrect version of this affair, as will be seen by the following communication. Editors are as liable to be imposed upon as other folks, and in this case we must acknowledge that our informant led us to do injustice to the parties concerned.

In the case of the death of Welch at Wilmington there was no evidence either before the jury or out of doors, that he was intoxicated. A constable (Walrath) was ordered to arrest a desperate fellow who had announced that he would not be taken. Walrath requested another constable, Kimble, and J. Lyons to be in sight to render their services if needed.

When resistance was made and the constable assaulted with chairs etc., he called his posse. They secured their prisoner peaceably paying no attention to Welch, but while removing the prisoner, Welch assailed Kimble with the fire tongs; these he exchanged for a long handled iron shovel which he was using with effect, wounding him considerably - and repeating his blows which Kimble parried with a small box.

Lyons seeing the desperate encounter gave Welch a punch with a spear - the latter not desisting, Lyons changed ends and gave him a blow on the head which fractured his skull.

This was the testimony of Lyons first, corroborated by the two constables - by the prisoner's wife and daughter, and by several of Welch's friends. Nor was there any discrepancy in the facts as given before the jury.

The box was brought in and exhibited evidence of repeated and severe blows, and so did Kimbles' wounds, and to conclude, the jury brought in "That Welch's death was caused by a blow with a spear in the hands of Joseph Lyon who was called by F. Walrath, a constable, to assist him in arresting Terrence McGovern - and that said Lyon was defending Jonathan Kimble, another constable called to said Walrath's assistance, from an assault made upon said Kimble by Welch with a fire shovel."

After reading this, I wondered if Lyons would ever again agree to be on a posse. I discovered that he not only enjoyed the experience, but twenty years later we find that he was the town Marshall.

We read on May 18, 1872, 'An equestrian performance took place on Wednesday evening, in front of Watson's shoe store, on Water Street. John Hayes, alias "red John," it seems had imbibed rather freely, and fancied himself a mounted policeman; he accordingly proceeded to clear the sidewalks of small boys and other obstructions. Marshal Lyons interposed, however, and postponed the performance indefinitely. Result, \$10.50 and costs."



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko



AVA CUPPLES



KARA PARDON

WHS seniors of the week

BY LILY TURCANY
WHS STUDENT REPORTER

Each week the Free Press Advocate features members from the Wilmington High School class of 2024. This week we're featuring Ava Cupples and Brian Baker who completed our questionnaire.

Ava Cupples

What do you plan to pursue upon graduation? I plan on attending JJC for two years then heading to Nicor Gas to start working a full time job.

What is your favorite high school memory? Being with the band when we won state my sophomore year.

What is one trend you wish you could get rid of? High waisted jeans.

What teacher or staff member has influenced you the most? Why? Mr. Dziuban, he's supported me through my wrestling career and trades career. He's done more for me than most teachers have.

What is your favorite Wilmington tradition? Catfish Days. The hype around it is so good, and plus it's fun to see everyone over the summer.

What has been your favorite class? Why? Building trades. I just get to do some of my favorite things. Whether it's sanding, painting, putting in floor, or whatever, when I'm not busy.

What has been your

favorite extracurricular that you've participated in? Wrestling.

What's your favorite thing on the lunch menu? Mini corn dogs and nachos.

Advice you would give to underclassmen? Walk on the right side of the hallway and don't stress about grades. Focus on having fun, it's high school, after all.

Kara Pardon

What do you plan to pursue upon graduation? Go to college.

What is your favorite high school memory? Prom.

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

What teacher or staff member has influenced you the most? Why? Mosier, she is so funny, and gives amazing critiques to make you work harder.

What is your favorite Wilmington tradition? Catfish Days.

What has been your favorite class? Why? History, it's really fun to learn about!

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

What's your favorite thing on the lunch menu? Mini corn dogs and mac and cheese.

Advice you would give to underclassmen? Always pay attention and try your hardest.



Courtesy photo

BRUNING ELEMENTARY STUDENTS from first grade were given Sunshine Awards this week, students include (front, from left) Brielle, Brody, Bo, Cole, Evan, Teta, Everett, Mia and Reed. Back Row: Norah, Sofia, Charlie, Scarlett, Anastasia, Levi, Aiden, Bobbie, Jenna and Cooper.



Courtesy photo

KINDERGARTEN SUNSHINE AWARDS were given to students from Bruning Elementary, students include (front, from left) Robert, Maggie, Ruth, Annabelle, Connor and JJ. Back Row: Michael, Maggie, Ivy, Maddux, Caroline, Ellie, Ila, Mabel, Jorah and Jolene.



Courtesy photo

BRUNING ELEMENTARY Pre-school Sunshine Awards were given to students this week, they include (from left) Owen, Kai, Xavier, McCoy and Madison.

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Free Press Newspapers readers

SOUND-OFF

To voice your opinion 24 hours a day, go to
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A giant Coaler

COAL CITY— Since the Coal City Board of Education has so much money (in the millions) to burn on all their pet projects, why not buy the Gemini Giant being auctioned off in Wilmington?? They could put it on the new turf they're spending \$5 million dollars on.

Say no to theocracy

WILMINGTON—Why is so much criticism directed at 'white evangelicals' these days? Perhaps because white evangelicals are removing many of our freedoms by trying to impose their religious beliefs on everyone else including other Christians. In other words, they are trying to transform our democracy into a theocracy. But Americans, including Christians, vehemently refuse to be told what to do. As patriots, we should continue along the path of peace, justice and the rule of law which our nation adopted centuries ago. There have been adjustments along the way such as the abolition of slavery and engaging in foreign wars to protect our allies and the result has made us the most powerful nation in the world as well as the most admired. Love your neighbor with no exception. Protect democracy and protect the vote. Isn't this what our country has always striven to achieve? Sadly the MAGA folks of the white evangelical movement accept fascism with the promise of dictatorship. Just say no.

Wish it gone

COAL CITY—Could someone please take down the giant skeletons on east First St.? If they need help please someone volunteer.

Living the easy life

DIAMOND—Dick Durbin has been blocking bills in Congress that would allow the police to pick up migrants that commit crimes in the U.S. and hold them in jail until deportation. But our senator only believes in his own safety and not the lives of the people that voted him into office. Maybe someone can tell me exactly what has Dick Durbin has ever done for the Illinois except to collect his paycheck and forget his responsibility of oath of office to protect the lives of Americans. Durbin has lived an easy life for decades and I wonder if he has cut any back door deals to enrich his wallet. Vote a Democrat into office and their promises and their oath of office will disappear after they collect taxpayers funds.

The new America

WIMINGTON—Who would have thought the Republican Party might be ushering in a whole new America? Authoritarian style, that is. If so, our patriotic songs need to be changed by eliminating certain phrases such as "land of the free" and "home of the brave" because these will no longer be true. Do you want to be thrown in jail for voicing an opinion opposite the reigning dictator? Look at what happened to Navalny in Putin's Russia where Navalny was murdered in prison like others before him. And if you think your safety is secure due to your pledge of loyalty, that can change in an instant as we've already witnessed during Trump's presidency. Michael Cohen went to jail for the crime that Trump ordered Cohen to commit for Trump's sleazy benefit. And remember what Melania said in 2016? Her husband will "punch back ten times harder" if he is attacked. Consider yourself warned. Irene

Veterans benefits aplenty

SHADOW LAKES— On Monday, March 11, the US Department of veterans affairs announce their 2025 yearly budget at \$369.3 billion. To give an idea of how much money that is the state of Illinois budget for an entire year is a little bit over \$50 billion. This money

pays for programs like the veterans health care system, which is the biggest health care system in the country. It also pays for veterans' disability benefits, pension benefits and assistance programs, too many to mention in this article. Please don't tell me that America doesn't take care of the veterans in this country. We love and respect veterans.

No senior discount

SHADOW LAKES— On Monday, March 11, the residence of Shadow Lakes had an emergency meeting to talk about the vote for the proposed agreement for sewer charges from the city of Braidwood to Shadow Lakes. In the meeting it was sad that there are about 270 permanent residences in Shadow Lakes, and that the rest of them are part-timers that only come around in the summer, mostly only for week-ends. Channel leaks is composed of something like 800 and something properties there are still, many empty with no sewer or water. The so-called part-timers are only a few. There are many properties in Shadow Lakes that stay empty all year. Some of them are even abandoned. The agreement was the Lakes will pay the same amount that Braidwood city residents pay for a total of 500 properties. Homeowners associations has been racing. They do by large amount for the last three years to come up with the money to pay the city of Braidwood. One of the things that impress me about the meeting on March 11, was the complaining from the residents in attendance about little things, but in a room full of senior citizens, when they were told the Shadow Lakes residents are gonna pay full price and we're not gonna be able to claim a senior discount. Nobody said a word.

Bearing false witness

WILMINGTON— This is in response to Sharon from Diamond. You stated no one in MAGA world is pro Putin, but Trump told Putin to do whatever he wants to our NATO allies. So there is that. Having read your prior soundoffs, I know you fancy yourself as some kind of Christian so how do you justify supporting a covetous fornicating adulterer who bears false witness?

The next invasion

WILMINGTON—We will soon be hit with boat loads of Haitians on our shore fleeing their country, a country of criminals and gangs because of Biden's open door. In Haiti the people believe in the walking dead and a zombie whose mind is in control of someone else, much like Biden voters.

An honorable man

COAL CITY—Remember the constant gaze of admiration from former Vice President Pence upon his boss, President Trump, throughout the four years of Trump's presidency? It was a curiosity that featured the juxtaposition of two very different men. Of course, Pence is an honorable man. First and foremost, he withstood the death menace of the gallows at the insurrection and carried through with his official role in making Biden the President. For this act of patriotism which Trump considered a betrayal, Trump again and again reminded his followers to label Pence a traitor instead of the hero he is for bravely doing his Constitutional duty. The truth is that Pence is a man of extraordinary virtue and his recent announcement that he would not be supporting Trump for the 2024 presidential race should be viewed as guidance to us all. Although it was years in the making, Pence knows Trump better than most.

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.

'TIKTOK IS SINISTER AND NEEDS TO BE SOLD, OR WE WILL BAN IT.' - U.S. CONGRESS



The EV question

BRAIDWOOD—Biden gave \$5 billion for 500,000 EV charging stations to be built across the US. Very few have been built with taxpayer money. Where has the money gone? Who was given the contract?

Need our prayers

BRAIDWOOD—On Christmas Day, hundreds of Christians who had been slaughtered by Muslim terrorists were buried in a mass grave in Plateau State, Nigeria. Nigeria is the most dangerous place on earth for Christians. During 2023, about 16 Christians died per day for their faith in Jesus. Over 6,000 were massacred leaving behind thousands of orphans. Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram have murdered entire church congregations with machetes. Also entire villages have been destroyed. Please pray for the Christians in Nigeria and the orphaned children.

Postmark required

COAL CITY—In the March 13 Soundoff, a Braidwood contributor erroneously stated that Illinois mail-in ballots are accepted for two weeks after the election date, and that they don't even have to be postmarked. The latter part of that statement is not true. They are indeed required to be postmarked. One of the major reasons we have absentee voting is to allow American citizens who are out of the country-military, government and civilian workers, etc. their rightful voice in our elections. Of course it is necessary to allow the two-week grace period for mail to arrive from outside the country, as long as it's properly postmarked. We have the same right to vote by mail inside our country as well, and in recent past elections one political party largely opposed voting by mail, citing a trumped-up fear of election fraud that proved not to exist. I hope that the Braidwood writer was not purposely trying to discourage mail in voting, but I didn't have to look very long or hard to find the truth about the postmark requirement.

Supporting migrants

SHADOW LAKES—For the person that's complaining about paying for the migrant crisis, my question for you is how much was the last check that you wrote to the migrants? Because if you didn't write a check, you are not paying for anything. Let me explain it to you. If

you live in the area and you are local all your local taxes are going to local services like the local school, the local police department, the local fire department and the local park. Your federal taxes, the average working American pays \$10,000 on federal taxes your \$10,000 into a budget goes to pay for things like the military, national parks, infrastructure and many other things including funding wars in other countries. So out of your \$10,000 that you are paying on income tax, that's if you pay taxes, how much do you think is going to migrants? I'll tell you how much. If you cut a penny in 10,000 pieces maybe one of those pieces is going to migrants. The average citizen of the state of Illinois pays \$3,000 a year on state taxes. Same story here. The amount of your state tax money is going to migrants it's nothing so you see you're not paying for anything. And if you are a local that lives in the area, you probably will never see a migrant. You get all worked up over nothing. Now this doesn't mean that there's not a problem, it's a matter of perspective. Everybody loves to demonize migrants when in reality, they are the victims. People that are suffering are fleeing their countries because they have no food. They have no shelter. They have no jobs they're not looking for handouts, they're looking for a better life and a lot of them have been lied to by traffickers. Take the little bit that they have in the exchange for bringing them here because they're being told there is a free-for-all here which, of course is not true. You get one migrant, they commit a crime and yeah that's bad but because one migrant commits a crime, you're gonna demonize everybody else? The crisis here is all a matter of how you wanna see it. I see it is a humanitarian crisis. And if a half a penny of my taxes goes to pay for a meal for a migrant child that's sleeping on a floor of a police station in the city of Chicago, I'm OK with that.

Rickles for president

WILMINGTON—I wish Don Rickles were still alive. He was ahead of his time. He would be the perfect Republican candidate to run for president since so many people seem to adore a candidate that puts people down all the time, humiliates people, insults people, and calls people names. He could even call the current Republican candidate "dum dum." Rickles would be a shoo-in.

IL House panel seeks health insurance reforms

Bill seeks to reduce denials of coverage, improve provider networks

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

A panel of Illinois lawmakers began hearing testimony last week on Gov. JB Pritzker's proposals for sweeping changes in the state's health insurance industry.

The changes, which Pritzker first unveiled in his State of the State address in February, would limit the ability of companies to deny claims or steer patients toward cheaper, and possibly less effective, treatments.

They are contained in an amendment to House Bill 5395.

They include banning prior authorization requirements for people to receive in-patient treatment at a psychiatric facility as well as all forms

of so-called "step therapy" for prescription drug coverage. Step therapy refers to the practice of requiring a patient to try one or more cheaper, alternative medications before being allowed to access medications prescribed by their doctor.

Other changes in the plan include requiring insurance companies to publicly post the types of treatments and therapies that do require prior authorization; requiring them to maintain accurate lists of the providers who are in their networks; and banning the sale in Illinois of short-term, limited duration insurance plans that don't meet the minimum standards under the federal Affordable Care Act.

Emily Miller, a senior advisor in Pritzker's office, tried to assure the House Human Services Committee that the administration was not waging war against the health insurance industry.

"Insurance has a role to play, and I'm not here to demonize the insurance



Photo by Peter Hancock, Capitol News Illinois

SEN. PATRICK JOYCE, D-Essex, speaks to the House Human Services Committee last week about proposed changes that would limit the ability of insurance companies to deny claims or steer patients toward cheaper, and possibly less effective, treatments.

industry," she said. "I am here, though, to say that it is time for consumers to have a say in how insurance companies are administering their health care plans. And we want to make sure that consumers are protected."

During the hearing, the committee heard personal stories from individual patients and their families, including some legislators, who spoke about their experiences having claims denied by their insurers.

Among them was state Sen. Patrick Joyce, D-Essex, whose son was born with a rare heart malfunction that requires treatments for which he needs prior authorizations. He also had a daughter who died following a long battle with leukemia.

"We had her stay four days in the hospital because we couldn't get a nausea medication that we knew worked after chemo (round) two," he said. "We couldn't get it authorized in chemo (round) three. Very frustrating. Four days in the hospital, and I'm not sure how that saves somebody money."

Dr. Mary Dobbins, a pediatrician and psychologist who is a past president of the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, testified about what she called a "mental health crisis" among children and youth in the United States. She said the crisis has been "artificially magnified by the requirements that tie up our time, our clinical time."

"I've had multiple patients who destabilized because medicine they'd been doing well on was now denied, and the parents couldn't afford to pay for it out of pocket," she said. "The appropriate level of care is commonly denied."

But LORI Reimers, who represents the Pharmaceutical Care Management Association, a trade association for pharmacy benefit managers, argued that practices like step therapy and prior authorization requirements are important

to control costs. Without them, she said, businesses couldn't afford to offer health benefits to their employees.

"Insurance cards are not magic wands that simply make going to the hospital or going to the pharmacy more affordable," she said. "There is incredible work in negotiating those costs between hospitals, physicians—both medical and behavioral—(and) drug manufacturers, all through a sophisticated and, yes, very complicated network of tools. Without these tools, costs cannot be negotiated down and eventually insurance is no longer attainable."

Speaking at a news conference after the hearing, Pritzker brushed aside suggestions that his proposals would result in higher costs for consumers.

"Nobody's getting rid of broad cost controls here. That is not what this is about," he said. "There are specific things—and we've done this before, this is not unusual—there are specific things where insurance companies are taking advantage of the power that they have. And we're simply saying, 'You've got to be more reasonable,' that there are situations in which you can't, and shouldn't, stop people from getting the health care that they need on the spot."

The committee took no action but Chair Anna Moeller, D-Elgin said the committee plans to hold more discussions and could vote as early as this week to advance the bill to the full House.

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Breakfast with the Easter bunny

The Wilmington Park District and VFW are hosting an Easter breakfast with the bunny on Saturday, March 23, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Bring the whole family and enjoy a breakfast buffet, pictures with the bunny and an Easter craft. Space is limited so it is suggested to reserve a spot.

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The meanest primary in Illinois this spring

"The woke left is coming after me for peeing on a tree during my college days," state Rep. Adam Niemerg (R-Dietrich) told me not long ago.

I've told you about this race before. The 102nd Illinois House District is one of a handful of southeastern and southern Illinois Republican primaries that might slow or intensify the Republican Party's rightward lunge. They've featured far-right candidates trying to fend off or battling with more mainstream Republicans. US Rep. Mike Bost's race against the much further-right Darren Bailey has been another.

Niemerg, an anti-union, anti-abortion, pro-gun Illinois Freedom Caucus stalwart, was responding at the time to an opposition report I'd seen about him. That research eventually found its way into a TV ad from an Illinois Education Association-funded group helping Niemerg's Republican primary opponent Jim Acklin, a former school superintendent.

The ad is paid for by Illinois Working PAC, an independent expenditure committee which spent more than \$100,000 on the race and received all of its funding from the IEA. The teachers union and other unions directly contributed another \$120,000 to Acklin's campaign. That gave Acklin almost twice the spending power as Rep. Niemerg.

"Adam Niemerg sure talks a lot, but what is he not telling you?" the ad's announcer asked. "Well, there's the DUI



CAPITOL FACTS
Rich Miller

Niemerg got, more than twice the limit. And how he pleaded guilty to obscene conduct."

OK, let's stop right there for a moment. Niemerg was busted in 2003 for DUI, speeding a n d possession/consumption of alcohol by a minor. He paid a fine and had to go to treatment. Then, on 4/20 (heh) of 2006, Niemerg was busted for obscene conduct. He pleaded guilty, paid a fine and was given 90 days supervision.

Niemerg has not addressed the claims via his own advertising, even though "obscene conduct" can conjure up quite a large number of scenarios. Also, a lot of homeless people charged with peeing on trees end up in a heap of legal trouble, so it's not that funny to them. The anti-Niemerg ad is also being pushed hard online, and as of last Friday afternoon it had 232,000 YouTube views, which is more than twice the total population of a House district.

A group called American Action Fund, however, punched back on Niemerg's behalf with social media ads on another topic. "Jim Acklin failed to act when complaints were filed against his friend and chose to blame the victim while superintendent. Acklin looked the other way and let a predator roam free in his school for years, now he wants to be your State Rep. Our State Rep. should stand up for us, not their buddy."

The ad links to a 2016 news story (which was basical-

ly an opposition research report released when Acklin was running for a House seat) entitled, "In sexual misconduct suit, State Rep candidate said female student was responsible for relationship with teacher."

According to Facebook, the ad generated up to 40,000 impressions by last Friday.

Acklin brushed off the attack, noting that the lawsuit "was based on entirely false allegations," and was, "so unfounded that it was ultimately dismissed with prejudice against the plaintiff, which means that I can never again be sued for that false allegation."

"I was exonerated because I handled the situation exactly as it should have been handled; I suspended and barred the employee involved from school property within minutes of learning of the allegations. The individual in question will never be able to teach in Illinois again because of the action I took." But Acklin hasn't specifically countered the claim that I can tell.

This has been, without a doubt, the meanest primary in Illinois this spring.

Let's go back to the Acklin TV ad: "Niemerg voted to allow minors convicted of serious crimes to be paroled. And remember those Obama DACA aliens? Niemerg voted to allow them to become police officers. I guess with Adam Niemerg, it's not what he says, but what he doesn't say that's important."

Niemerg has denied that he voted to allow DACA recipients to become police officers. But he did vote for the bill when it applied to non-citizens. Niemerg and a few others voted "No" after it was amended to explicitly include DACA folks.

And a recent Niemerg mailer features some rather incendiary quotes from American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten and Chicago Teachers Union president Stacy Davis Gates and ties them to Acklin.

"Jim Acklin is completely funded by the radical, left-wing extremists," the mailer blares.

I'll let you know how it plays out.

Route 66 Red Carpet Corridor Flea Market and Arts & Crafts Show

Sponsored by Wilmington Chamber of Commerce

The Route 66 Red Carpet Corridor Flea Market and Arts & Crafts Show will be held Saturday, May 4, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., rain or shine, on North Water Street in Wilmington.

Exhibitors' spaces will be approximately 10-feet wide by 10-feet deep. A non-refundable fee of \$45 no later than April 15. \$60 for a space if paid April 16 or later. Chamber members are given a \$20 discount on vendor fees.

Set-up time begins at 7 a.m. After checking in at the north end of Water St. and arrive no later than 8 a.m. and remove all vehicles before 8:40 a.m. or spaces will be forfeited.

The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce will not assume liability for losses, damages and/or injuries by or to exhibitors.

Applications can be submitted and paid on line at wilmingtonchamber.org/redcarpet. Checks must be mailed and made payable to Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, 616 Davy Ln, Wilmington, IL 60481.

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I hereby make application for space at the Wilmington Red Carpet Corridor Flea Market and Arts & Crafts Show May 4, 2024. I hereby agree to the terms and conditions.

Wilmington Library to have book sale

The Wilmington Public Library District will be holding a used book sale March 23 and March 24.

The sale will run from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Saturday and from noon until 4 p.m. on Sunday. Books will be sold for \$3 a bag, and the library will provide the bag.

Donations of clean, smoke-free books and DVDs for the book sale will be

accepted through March 21, with a limit of one box donated per patron due to space limitations.

The library kindly asked for books free of mold, dirt, and smoke damage. No encyclopedias, VHS, National Geographics, outdated medical & text books or other obsolete materials will be accepted.

Women in the woods hike

The Forest Preserve District of Will County will host a Women in the Woods Hike on Saturday, March 23, from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Four Rivers Environmental Education Center, Channahon.

Join fellow women of the woods on this hike to cele-

brate woman's role in nature. Along the trail, learn about the historical women who have quite literally paved the way.

Discover the women blazing their own trails today and explore the paths chosen by women of the future. Free, women and girls ages 10 or older. Register by March 22.

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A smile and “what’s your name” goes a long way

ELAINE FISHER-OHLUND
FOOD FOR THE SOUL

It was the first nice day we had and school had just been let out. Kids were walking home and it flooded me with memories. I can remember getting out of school and heading home with the sun warm on my face, walking with other neighborhood friends.

I’d occasionally look over my shoulder for the class bully who would sometimes torment me. It was almost a rite of passage to childhood. It was always nice to make that walk home on a nice day.

Watching kids today however, is different. They walk like zombies, phones in hand, head down, barely looking up to cross the street. It makes me sad. How did we get to this point in society?

I was walking into the grocery store when I noticed us adults aren’t setting a good example. Heads down, looking at phones, scanning the grocery list, focusing at the task at hand, too busy to make eye contact with anyone.

Thoughts and worries about society flooded my mind as I approached the produce guy. I trouble this man every week with a list of foods that I was unable to find but

knew they probably had in back.

This week however, as I approached him, we made eye contact and his energy shifted. It was almost like I read his mind and it was saying “great, here comes that crazy lady with the impossible list.”

Feeling bad and being socially awkward, I switched gears. I barked at him, “Hi, what’s your name?” He jumped while responding “Leon.”

“Hi Leon, I just wanted to know your name because you do a good job helping me find the food I need to feed my family and I appreciate it.” His energy shifted again but this time with a smile. He asked kindly, “what can I get you this week?”

A seed of friendship had been planted. Every Wednesday I walk in and am happy to see him. I also have gotten to know his helper Brian. They are quite the duo, stocking the produce section with a little banter back and forth.

It wasn’t until this last Wednesday I approached the produce section to hear Brian holler, “Leon…… Wednesday Sunshine is here, are you going to tell her or do you want me too?”

I felt an immediate blush

on my face.

Leon came over and said, “I’m so sorry Miss but I have tried all week to get you the big green watermelons but they have been impossible to order. We do have the small ones though.”

Brian chimed in, “she doesn’t like the small ones remember.”

“That’s ok and thank you so much for trying,” I replied.

Brian chimed in again, “Now tell her about the bars.”

Leon explained, “So you know the protein bars you like, well they are discontinuing them.”

Brian smiled, “Wednesday sunshine is going to kick your butt now.”

Leon, “shut-up Brian, but I did save you the last box in back.” My heart melted that they had thought of me and this had become a mutual friendship.

They know I buy watermelons every week for my husband and they have to be the big green ones. They know my daughter only likes the purple grapes. They know I buy double the protein for my son. They know I prefer organic. They save special treats for me. They gave me a cute nickname and care enough not to want to disappoint me. And I truly appreciate them for all of it.

I even giggled to myself thinking they know my wants better than my husband. Our friendship has been solidified and it started with a smile and “what’s your name?”

A simple smile and kindness go a long way.

The next time we went to the store, Zach and Layla were with me and I introduced them to Brian and Leon. I told them these were the two kind men that help feed them.

When Brian met my growing 16-year-old he chimed in, “Man I see why your mom buys you double the protein.” Zach could only crack a smile.

As we were checking out Layla struck up a conversation with the sweet lady that bags the groceries. They found out their favorite Disney movie was the same, Moana. Layla left the store with a giant smile on her face saying “Zach, can you believe our favorite movie is the same.”

Kindness is contagious. So let’s lead our kids by example, get our heads out of our phones and get to know the people in our community.

Live in the present and appreciate those who serve you, right down to the produce guy at your local grocery store. Have a great week everyone and I appreciate our subscribers too.

Report public corruption, State Police have website

To help root out public corruption in Illinois, the Illinois State Police (ISP) Special Investigations Unit (SIU) has created an online form for the public to report suspected corruption directly to ISP.

Examples of public corruption may include an elected official steering contracts to friends in exchange for a monetary kickback, overbilling a contractor and embezzling the money, personally benefiting from federal/state-funded programs, wire fraud, and money laundering.

Visit <https://isp.illinois.gov/CriminalInvestigations/SIUComplaintDisclaimerForm>.



Helpful duo presented Chamber trophy

THE WILMINGTON CHAMBER of Commerce recently presented the Employee of the Month trophy to Kendra Black and Amanda Roge who were nominated for their work with the Wilmington Lions Club. “These ladies make a great team!” commented Lions Club officer John Persic who presented them with the trophy.



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OBITUARIES

Donna Couch

STEGER, IL—Donna M. Couch, 55, of Steger, IL, passed away Saturday, March 16, 2024 at Ascension St. Mary Hospital in Kankakee.

Born July 19, 1968 in Blue Island, IL, Donna Marie was a daughter of Barry Francis and Marianne (Paskauskas) Quinn. She was raised in Riverdale and graduated from Thornton Township High School with the class of 1986.

On Sept. 21, 2002, Donna married Todd Couch and he preceded her in death on Sept. 19, 2020.



Donna dedicated many years of service as a secretary at the Cook County State's Attorney Office in Chicago with the narcotics unit. Additionally, she operated various home-based businesses over the years.

Known for her vibrant spirit and infectious energy, Donna was the heartbeat of any gathering. Her love for shopping, baking, music and dancing illuminated every room she entered. Game nights and card games were synonymous with laughter and joy in her presence. Alongside Todd, karaoke nights were cherished memories they held dear. After becoming a mother to Sean Michael Couch, Donna's world revolved around his happiness and activities. She dedicated herself to working concessions at Steger Storm Football games, for the Steger Little League, and at the Steger Rec Club. In addition she was proud to be a part of the PTA.

Fondly remembered as a kind-hearted soul with a hint of sarcasm that only added to her charm. Donna's selfless nature always put oth-

ers before herself and family was her cornerstone.

Survivors include her son, Sean Michael Couch; siblings: Kevin (Jenny) Quinn, of Manteno; Ellen (James) Georgeff, of Wilmington and Michael (Gina) Messina, of Tennessee; nieces and nephews: Megan (Michael) Mueller, Haley (Collin) Harding, Samantha Quinn, James Georgeff and Emily Georgeff, and many aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Donna was preceded in death by her parents, Barry and Marianne Quinn and Elaine Quinn, and husband, Todd.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd. in Wilmington on Saturday, March 23, 2024 from 12 p.m. until time of funeral service at 4 p.m. Deacon Milt Leppert will preside.

Cremation rites will be accorded following the services and Donna and Todd will be laid to rest in Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Wilmington.

Preferred memorials may be made to South Suburban Humane Society in Matteson or to the family for the benefits of Donna's son, Sean.

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

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

Mae Pogliano

COAL CITY—Mae Pogliano, 97, of Coal City, passed away with her family by her side on March 15, 2024.

Born April 2, 1927 in Chicago, Mae was the daughter of Raymond and Emma Henning, of Chicago. She was raised and educated in Chicago and graduated from Farragut High School.

Mae was a member of the Coal City Area Club and Assumption Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Coal City. She had a great love of the ocean and spending time with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Mae will be remembered as a beautiful and selfless person whose family meant everything to her. She always placed everyone first in front of her and was the matriarch of our family.

Mae married Robert Pogliano in 1947 where they raised two daughters and four sons on a farm in Goose Lake. They were married 25 wonderful years.

Survivors include her daughters, Pat (Pierre) Brown Dube, of Laughlin, NV; Carol (Kurt) Budde, of Coal City; her sons: Robert (Linda) Pogliano, Jim Pogliano, Don (Connie Terrel) Pogliano and Bill (Sharon) Pogliano, all of Coal City. She is also survived by her grandchildren: Ryan Talty, Tyler Talty, William (Anna) Pogliano, Rachel (Dave) Cullen, Benjamin



(Shana) Pogliano, Bobby Jr. (Blythe) Pogliano, and Daniel Pogliano; great-grandchildren: Graham Talty, Kyla Pogliano, Jaden Pogliano, Anthony Burcham, Troy Pogliano, Katrina Cullen and Liam Pogliano.

Mae was preceded in death by her parents, Emma and Raymond Henning; her husband, Robert Pogliano and her granddaughter, Rebecca Pogliano.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in Coal City on Tuesday, March 19, 2024 with Reverend Joshua Miller presiding. Burial followed at Braceville-Gardner Cemetery.

Pallbearers were: Ryan Talty, Tyler Talty, Ben Pogliano, Billy Pogliano Jr, Daniel Pogliano and Bobby Pogliano Jr. Honorary Pallbearer was Rachel Cullen.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Mae's memory to her family for their distribution.

Friends may sign the online guest book or send private condolences to the family by logging onto: www.ReevesFuneral.com

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

JoAnn Gallagher

CHICAGO—JoAnn Gallagher (nee Goudie), 79, of Chicago, passed away peacefully on Sunday, March 10, 2024.

A former resident of Mt. Greenwood, JoAnn was a dedicated member of St. Christina Catholic Church in Chicago, and former founder of The Caring Ladies Crochet Group, which lovingly crocheted and donating hats and blankets to local hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Units. JoAnn previously belonged to the Mt. Greenwood Garden Club, where she shared her love of flowers with the community and worked for Illinois Bell; retiring from SBC Global telephone company.

Survivors include her daughter, Julie (Gerard) Neveau; son, Frank (Tracy); grandchildren Abigail Neveau and Dakota Gallagher; many nephews, nieces, cousins and friends.

She was preceded in death by her father, John Robert Goudie Sr.; mother, Stephanie (nee



Antas) Goudie, and brothers, James Goudie and John Goudie.

Cremation rites were accorded.

The family received friends for a memorial visitation at St. Christina Catholic Church, 3342 W. 111th St. in Chicago on Saturday, March 16, 2024 from 10:30 a.m. until time of funeral service at 11:30 a.m. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated with Rev. Father Thomas Bernas presiding.

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

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

John Schneider

WILMINGTON—John "Jack" Schneider, 83, of Wilmington, passed away Sunday, March 10, 2024 at his home.

Born Nov. 10, 1940 in Lostant, IL, Jack was a son of John and Myrtle (Day) Schneider.

He was raised and educated in Lostant while his family built their family home in Indian Head Park, where he remained for many years until relocating to Lockport and then finally Wilmington.

Jack was a heavy equipment operator and he truly loved his work. One of his greatest joys was operating a backhoe, cutting and shaping the earth with precision accuracy.

When not at work, Jack enjoyed fishing in the summertime and watching the Chicago Bears in the wintertime.

He was a loyal friend, quick to lend a hand to whomever needed it, and he had a special place in his heart for all animals, especially his dogs.

Survivors include his wife, Penny, his sons: John (Doreen), Jeff (Debbie), Joe, Jim Day, and Christopher, and his daughters, Brenda Sparks



and Lori Abill (Keith), as well as his grandchildren: Candace, Hillary, Drew, Alex, Courtney, Marcus, Pete Rombakis, Krystle, Cameron, Kyle, Bethany, and great-grandchildren and one sister, Carol (Gerry) and one brother, Robert (Donna), and many nieces and nephews.

Jack was preceded in death by his parents.

Per his wishes, cremation rights are being accorded and a Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

In Lieu of flowers, memorials in Jack's name may be made as gifts in his memory to Lightways Hospice, 250 Water Stone Circle, Joliet, IL 60431.

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

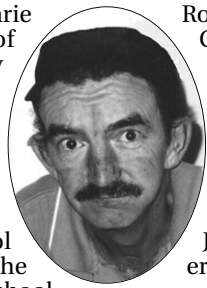
Cremation services and memorial arrangements are being made under the direction and care of Reeves & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory in Wilmington.

Perry Guthrie Sr.

WILMINGTON—Perry "Pete" Guthrie Sr., 72, of Wilmington, formerly of Tennessee and Arizona, passed away Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee.

Born April 27, 1951 in Wilmington, Perry Dale was a son of Dale and Goldie (Hoy) Guthrie. He was raised and educated in Wilmington and graduated from Wilmington High School with the class of 1969. Pete worked for the papermill in Wilmington out of high school until he began a career as a mechanic. His career spanned over 25 years, demonstrating a strong work ethic and dedication for several different employers. Perry truly loved working on cars, allowing for his career to not just provide for him and his family, but to be something he was passionate about and brought him great joy. When he wasn't working, he liked to go fishing and shoot pool, but nothing was more important to him than seeing his family grow from his children to grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Survivors include three children: Perry Guthrie Jr. of Wilmington, Brian Angelo, of



Rockford, IL and Bobby (Heather Burgett) Guthrie, of Elwood; and five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; five brothers and sisters: Brenda (Tom) Stacy, of Wilmington; Shirley Latham, of Florida; Linda Moore, of Tennessee; Tina (the late Sid) Bergman, of Carmi, IL and Brian (Jane) Guthrie, of McLeansboro, IL; one sister-in-law, Judy Guthrie, of McLeansboro, and several nieces and nephews.

Pete was preceded in death by his parents; one brother, Bill Guthrie, and one sister, Paulette, in infancy; and his former wife, Mary Guthrie.

Per his wishes, cremation rites are being accorded and a celebration of life is being planned for a later date.

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

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

Oakwood Cemetery seeking volunteers for April 13 cleanup

Oakwood Cemetery will host its spring cleanup at 8 a.m., on Saturday, April 13 on the cemetery grounds at off Williams Street in Wilmington.

Those interested in helping should meet at the shed at 8 a.m. for coffee, doughnuts, and instructions.

For information or questions, please contact Tim Cragg at (815) 735-5147 or visit the cemetery's Facebook page.

Oakwood Cemetery rules and regulations

1. Cemetery hours are sunrise to sunset.
2. All planting and decorations shall be one foot in front

OR back of memorial and be maintained monthly, or will be removed by staff without notice.

3. No trees, bushes decorative rock, wood chips, fencing or perennials. Annuals only.
4. Oakwood Cemetery reserves the right to remove unsightly artifacts, floral, and other displays at their discretion and without notice.
5. Spring and fall cleanup dates are the months of April and November.
6. Winter decorations may be placed on graves after Nov. 15 and removed by April 1.
7. Any winter or summer

decorations you wish to save and reinstall should be removed by April 1 and Nov. 15.

8. Oakwood Cemetery is not responsible for stolen or damaged memorials, planting, or decorations.
9. Cremated remains will be buried by cemetery personnel only.
10. Spreading of cremated remains (including pets) is prohibited.
11. Oakwood Cemetery reserves the right to maintain all graves.
12. Please clean up after your pets.

Deadline drawing nearer for Hometown Heroes applications

The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce is taking applications for its 2024 Hometown Hero banner program.

The Chamber coordinates the hanging of banners along Wilmington's major streets recognizing current and former residents who have served our country in a branch of the military.

Banners purchased for 2024 will be displayed from Memorial Day through Veteran's Day for two years on poles along Route 53 (Historic 66) and Route 102 in Wilmington.

Each 24"x28" banner includes the veteran's name, branch of service, years active, and a photograph. Request for specific display locations cannot be honored, and banners are likely to appear in different

locations in their first and second years.

The cost to participate in the program is \$150 total for the two-year period. The deadline to apply is March 31, or until all spots are full

Nominees must meet all of the following requirements: Be a current or former resident of Wilmington. Served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Meets one of the following criteria: a) Is currently on active duty b) Honorably discharged c) Died in the line of duty.

The following information must be provided: • Signature for photo release. If living, the veteran must sign • Photograph of the veteran in uniform (see details below) • Copy of a military verification form (DD214, military ID, etc.)

The program requires an

original photograph of the veteran in uniform. Original prints, 35mm slides, or film strips can be accepted.

All applications, supporting documentation, and photos are to be submitted to the Wilmington Chamber office, 616 Davy Lane, or next door at Spins & Needles, 614 Davy Ln., in Wilmington.

At the end of the two-year display period, applicants will be contacted to pick up their banners. Banner displays cannot be extended beyond the second year, but you may reapply to have a new banner printed using the same information.

Email info@wilmingtonchamber.org. For an application visit wilmingtonchamber.org.

Elwood students awarded \$1,841 to build garden

Elwood School District #203 in Elwood is among 17 schools across the state awarded Schoolyard Habitat Action Grants totaling more than \$55,200.

Elwood School will receive \$1,841 to create a pollinator garden on school property from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Illinois Conservation Foundation (ICF).

"The Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant program provides children and educators with an opportunity to increase the use of native

plants in Illinois landscapes while benefitting wildlife species," said IDNR Director Natalie Phelps Finnie. "By participating in these projects, students learn that their efforts can make a positive difference in the world, and they gain experience in problem-based learning by planning, developing, and maintaining a native habitat."

The Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant program supports the development or enhancement of wildlife habitat on school grounds or other public places. Funding is provided through donations to

the ICF The Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Foundation are the major sponsors for this program.

Nearly \$400,000 in Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant funding has been distributed since the program's inception.

Applications will be accepted soon for the next round of Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action grants, with an application deadline of Nov. 30, 2024. Go online to access the application and related information or email dnr.teachkids@illinois.gov.

Bill would allow Illinoisans to carry license/ID information on phones

Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias is championing legislation to allow Illinois residents to start using digital driver's licenses and state IDs.

Giannoulias' backing marks the first time the Illinois Secretary of State's office has supported such a measure, which now includes digital IDs as well as digital driver's licenses.

If the bipartisan legislation passes, implementation could occur as early as next year.

"Smartphones have become convenient places to store everything from movie tickets, boarding passes and credit cards," Giannoulias said. "With technological advancements and additional safeguards to make it the most secure and state-of-the-art system in the nation, we're confident Illinoisans will soon have the option to 'carry' a digital version of their driver's license or state ID."

If approved in the General Assembly, Illinois would join 12 other states that already offer digital forms of identification (including bordering states – Iowa and Missouri) while at least 18 other states are currently working toward the implementation.

The legislation would not eliminate physical driver's licenses, but instead digital IDs would act as a companion to a physical card.

New technology allows for more privacy by allowing individuals to decide what personal information they share via a contactless encrypted data exchange between their device and the reader. Digital IDs offer privacy control options that allow people to verify their age when legally purchasing alcohol, cannabis or renting a car, while hiding other personal information – like their address.

Funding for Illinois EV charging stations

The Illinois Department of Transportation has released the first official Notice of Funding Opportunity for round one of the Illinois National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program, which will provide up to \$50 million for the construction of 46 charging stations across the state.

The Illinois NEVI program aims to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles by providing reliable access to charging on Illinois interstates.

At present there is one charging station in Wilmington at 212 N. Water St. The next station along Interstate 55 would be south to Dwight or

north to Joliet. Kankakee also has a handful of charging ports available.

"Ongoing EV adoption is a priority for my administration," said Gov. JB Pritzker. "Thanks to the NEVI's historic investment in clean energy infrastructure, we're able to build an integrated network of charging stations in Illinois' key travel corridors that will lead to new ridership."

Pritzker's goal to have one million EVs on Illinois roads by 2030. Applications for funding must be submitted by May 7 at 5 p.m.

For more information, contact IDOT at dot.driveelectric@illinois.gov.

IDOT to hold public hearing for Illinois 53 project Thursday

The Illinois Dept. of Transportation (IDOT) announced a public hearing will be held Thursday, March 21, on a proposed project to improve Illinois 53, between Patterson and River roads, in Will County.

The proposed project consists of intersection, drainage, and safety improvements, dedicated left turn lanes, and pedestrian and bicycle accommodations along the corridor. IDOT is proposing a dual

left lane turn, a shared-use path, a free flow right turn lane and thru lane addition at Illinois 53 and River Road in Wilmington.

IDOT is currently engaged in preliminary engineering and environmental studies

(Phase I) for improvements of Illinois 53 from N. River Road to Patterson Road in Joliet.

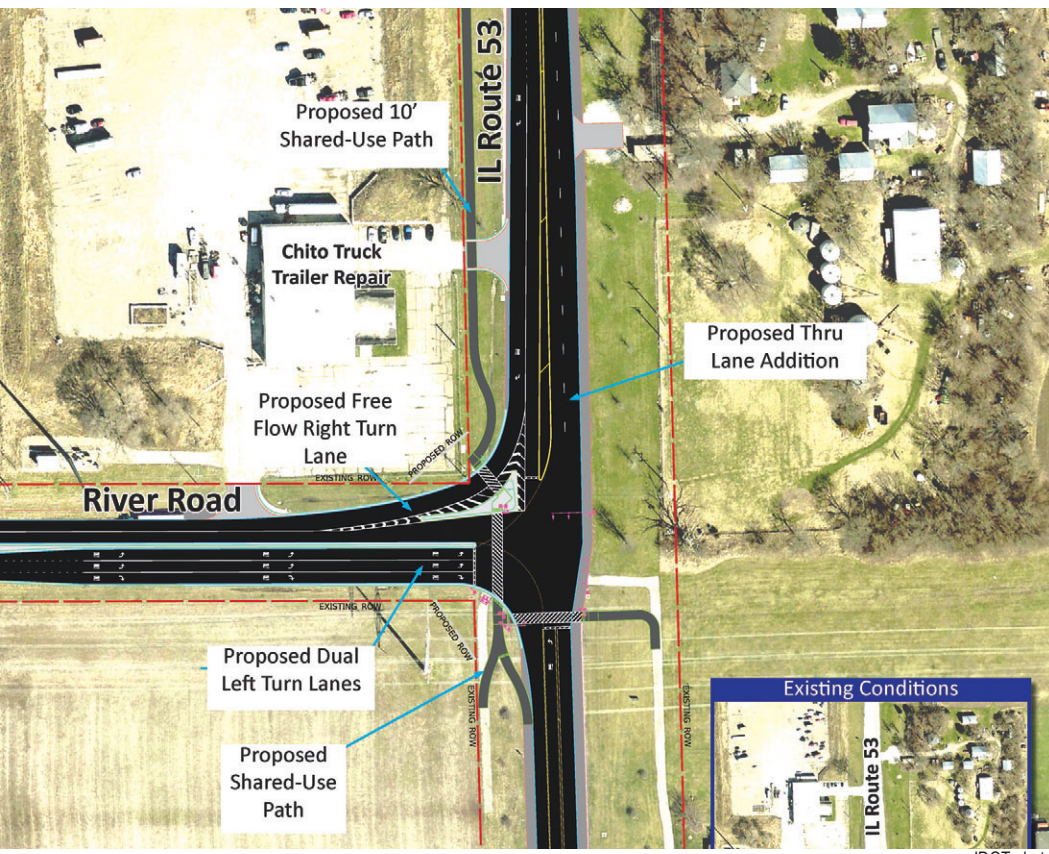
The Illinois 53 study area is located in the city of Joliet, village of Elwood, as well as the city of Wilmington.

Phase I study was initiated to address safety and operations along Illinois 53.

The March 21 hearing will be held from 4 to 7 p.m. at Stone City VFW, 124 Stone Dr., in Joliet.

The purpose of the hearing is:

- To describe the project development process.
- Present proposed improvements.
- Present the Section 4(f) analysis of Nowell Park.
- Present road closures at the east leg of Doris Ave., at the Illinois 53 intersection and the north leg of Nowell Ave., at the Mills Road/U.S. 52 intersection.
- Obtain public input.



RIVER ROAD at Illinois 53 near Wilmington will be widened to include dual turn lanes under a plan by the Illinois Department of Transportation. A open house on other Illinois 53 improvements will be held Thursday at the Stone City VFW near Laraway Road in Joliet.

Morris Hospital offering healthcare scholarships

The Morris Hospital Foundation is offering scholarships to students who are pursuing an education in healthcare. The scholarships are intended to encourage education in any health-related course of study while enhancing the availability of healthcare providers in the local community.

The \$1,000 Carol Harrington Endowed Morris Hospital Foundation Scholarship and the \$1,000 Relucio Family Healthcare Scholarship will each be awarded to a student who is pursuing an undergraduate education in a healthcare related field. Applicants must be accepted into, or currently enrolled in, a hospital-related health care curriculum at an accredited college, university or vocational/technical school and reside in one of the zip codes within Morris Hospital's

service area, which include: 60407, 60408, 60410, 60416, 60420, 60424, 60437, 60444, 60447, 60450, 60470, 60474, 60479, 60481, 60541, 61341, 61350, and 61360.

The Betty J. Sterritt Endowed Fund for Nursing Scholarship awards up to \$4,000 over a two-year period to a student who currently resides in or is from Grundy County, is currently enrolled in coursework leading to a nursing degree, and intends to serve as a nurse at a healthcare facility in Grundy County after their education is completed.

Applications for the Carol Harrington, Relucio Family, and Betty J. Sterritt scholarships are available on the hospital website by going to www.morrishospital.org/scholarships. Students may apply for as many scholarships as they would like by checking the appropriate boxes on the

scholarship application.

The Morris Hospital Foundation also offers the Hugo Avalos Endowed Scholarship, which awards up to \$5,000 to a student who has been accepted into or is currently enrolled in an accredited medical school, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant program. Applicants must be or have been a resident of Illinois. For a copy of the Hugo Avalos scholarship application, contact Hannah Wehrle, Auxiliary and Foundation Officer at Morris Hospital, at hwehrle@morrishospital.org or 815-705-7021.

Completed applications for all scholarships must be postmarked by April 19, 2024. Scholarship winners will be announced in May. For more information, contact the Morris Hospital Foundation at 815-705-7021.

Gas price 'madness' may slow down

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have fallen 2.1 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.68/g Monday, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Wilmington stations were charging between \$3.41/g to \$3.89/g. Braidwood stations were \$3.79/g across the board, while Coal City ranged from \$3.58/g to \$3.89/g. Morris charged between \$3.49/g to \$3.59/g. Bourbonnais came in lowest at \$3.33/g to \$3.59/g.

Prices in Illinois are 19.5/g cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 5.6/g higher than a year ago.

"Most Americans continued to see average gasoline prices march higher last week. The

reason is the season: gasoline demand is rising as more Americans are getting out, combined with the summer gasoline switchover, which is well underway, and continued refinery maintenance," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"The madness should slow down in the next few weeks as we've seen positive data that refinery output is starting to increase, a sign that the peak of maintenance season could be behind us."

According to gas price reports, the cheapest station in Illinois was priced at \$3.09/g yesterday, while the most expensive was \$4.99/g, a difference of \$1.90/g.



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1. Small Eurasian deer	1. Make up for
4. Irish county	2. Baltimore ballplayer
10. A major division of geological time	3. Salary
11. Broadway actor Lane	4. Influential world body
12. Canadian province (abbr.)	5. Engravers
14. Human gene	6. Declared as fact
15. Two	7. One who steals
16. A famous one is blue	8. Jewelry
18. Utter repeatedly	9. Hospital employee (abbr.)
22. Ring-shaped objects	12. Nonsense (slang)
23. Spoils	13. Town in Galilee
24. Occurs	17. Value
26. Commercial	19. A fake name
27. Near	20. Sheep in their second year
28. Products you may need	21. Town in Surrey, England
30. Pledge thrown down as a challenge	25. Appropriate for a particular time of year
31. TV network	29. Creative works
34. Silk or cotton garments	31. Recesses
36. Soviet Socialist Republics	32. W. Pacific island group
37. Retired American football coach	33. Tolkien character
Dean	35. Ancient symbol co-opted by the Nazi party
39. Hot dish	38. Pioneer
40. A type of gin	41. Scribe
41. Atomic #84	43. Painted a bright color
42. Sawhorse	44. Lowest members of British nobility
48. About ground	45. Actress Thurman
50. Medicine man	46. Type of sugar
51. Seedless raisin	47. Crest of a hill
52. Capital of Albania	49. N. American people of British Columbia
53. Appendix	56. Device
54. OJ trial judge	57. The Mount Rushmore State
55. By the way (abbr.)	
56. Bicycle parts	
58. Barbie's friend	
59. Moved one's neck to see	
60. Commercials	

CLASSIFIEDS

CLASSIFIED DEADLINES

Pre-payment required for all classified ads unless customer has a pre established business account

Deadlines
Classified Display
Fridays - 5 p.m.
Classified Word Ads
Mondays - noon

The Free Press Newspapers will be responsible for the first incorrect insertion, and its liabilities shall be limited to the price on one insertion. The Free Press Newspapers reserves the right to classify correctly, edit, reject or cancel any advertisement at any time in accordance with its policy. All ads must be checked for errors the first week of publication by the advertiser.

Phone (815) 476-7966 or (815) 634-0315 for details.



The Braidwood Journal — The Coal City Courier — The Free Press Advocate



Cost

Line Ads are up to 30 words (20¢ for each word over 30)
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\$1.00 Extra per line for bold or caps on classified
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MISCELLANEOUS

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SHOP YOUR LOCAL BUSINESSES!

FORK LIFT FOR SALE



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Stand up and be counted 2024 BUSINESS HONOR ROLL

What year does your business fall under? Call us now to be included on this full page

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Published March 27

The Free Press Newspapers

111 S. Water St
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271 S. Broadway
Coal City, IL 60416
(815) 634-0315



Photo by Eric Fisher

HELMETS UP—Wilmington sophomore Zach Ohlund (16) steps on home plate after hitting a grand slam his first turn at bat for the 2024 season. Ohlund finished the game 3-for-4 including a double with seven RBIs in a 15-0 win over Pontiac on Wednesday.

‘Cats come out swinging

The Wildcat varsity baseball team scored 30 runs in two games last week while holding their opponents scoreless to start the season.

They came out carrying a big stick on Wednesday in a home opener against Pontiac, beating them 15-0 in just four innings.

Junior right-hander Lucas Rink pitched four innings of shutout ball, allowing only one run while striking out eight and walking none. Rink helped himself by hitting 3-for-3 with one RBI.

The ‘Cats made a statement early, scoring six runs in

the first inning. They scored a run before loading the bases for sophomore Zach Ohlund who hit a grand slam his first turn at bat. Ohlund finished the game 3-for-4, including a double, with seven RBIs.

Wilmington added four runs in the second, two in the third, three in the fourth and would have kept on scoring hadn’t Pontiac saying mercy after the bottom of the fourth.

Sophomore Ryan Kettman went 2-for 3 and scored two runs. Senior Reid Juster, who made a spectacular catch at the fence in center field to deny a home run, had an RBI

single and a walk. Joe Allgood, a senior, also hit in a run. Ryan Smith singled and walked.

Another homer
Wilmington traveled to Prairie Central on Friday, winning 15-0 thanks to a big nine-run third inning.

Ohlund hit his second home run in two games and also doubled in finish 2-for-2 with five RBIs. Kettman was busy going 3-for-4 at the plate including a double. Rink doubled and walked with one RBI. Kyle Farrell had three stolen bases while contributing a pair of hits and two RBIs.

Also getting hits were

Cade McCubbin, Brendan Moran, Juster and Smith. In all the ‘Cats had 12 hits and played error-free defense for the second straight game. The had seven steals too.

Farrell, a junior, went all four innings on the mound, throwing a no-hitter while striking out six and walking two.

Wilmington hosts Lincoln Way East today (Wednesday) and will travel to Clifton Central Saturday and Reed-Custer Monday. On Tuesday they will host the Comets.



Photo by Jacquelyn Rink

A LEAPING CATCH at the fence by Wilmington senior Reid Juster robs Pontiac of a home run during a 15-0 victory for the Wildcats.



Courtesy photo

MIGHT ‘CATS at completed the state wrestling tournament winning six individual medals and two team trophies. Qualifiers included (from left) Laura Allen, Declan Wilking, Leonard Morgan, Maleya Campbell, Swayze Campbell, Lodi Morgan and Jenna Alsbury. Back row: coaches Jake Murphy, Joe Alsbury, Todd Combes and Jake Campbell.

Might ‘Cat wrestlers bring home state trophies

With the I.K.W.F hosting its first ever Intermediate/Bantam boys/girls State series, the Wilmington Mighty Cats arrived strong with eight state qualifiers for the first time in the history of the program.

Bantam girls Jenna Alsbury, Maleya Campbell and Swayze Campbell came out strong scoring some big team points. Jenna bumped up from Tots to Bantam and qualified for state and still won with a pin, which was huge.

Maleya and Swayze went about their business battling hard all weekend and racking up wins and points. In the end Maleya and Swayze not only became the club’s first State Champions, they were the first to do it at I.K.W.F girls Bantam state.

To go along with the three girls racking up points it became enough to become

team State Champions for their division. The Bantam boys Lodi Morgan, Declan Wilking and Leonard Morgan came to the state tournament to battle.

Lodi and Declan had an early round loss but kept their heads up and pressed forward giving it everything they had with several wins in a row and racking up team points.

Leonard was on a roll early, making it into the semi-final bout but lost a rough one. With all their hard work, Lodi walked away with a well earned fourth place, Declan with fifth place and Leonard third in the state. Their efforts didn’t just end with an Individual medal but they complied enough team points to walk away with fourth place team trophy.

The Mighty Cats Intermediate girls Sophie Burke and Laura Allen had a

bit of a rough start. Sophie wrestled tough and didn’t give up. When her day was through she kept her head up and a smile on her face.

Laura Allen was not ready to be done. She tightened up her laces and got refocused. Match after match Laura had to battle hard earning every win late into Saturday night. She found herself moving on to the second day of state wrestling to compete for a place at the state tournament. Laura walked away winning her fifth place match and making it to the podium.

The Mighty Cats brought home six individual state medals, including two championships, along with the two team trophies including the girls Bantam championship. Congratulations to the entire Wilmington Wrestling Club as you all work together to get better every day.

Wilmington tracksters sent 15 new PRs during Comet Classic

The Running Wildcats travelled to Reed-Custer on Saturday to compete in the annual Comet Classic against nine other teams.

Chicago Christian won the boys team title and Plano won the girls competition.

The Wildcat girls finished the meet with 7 points and the boys finished with 14.5 points. The Cats set 15 new personal records (PRs) on the day to bring their season total to 40. Girls results were:

Ava Cupples – (SR) – shot – 23’02 (PR) – 12th

Brooklyn Flores (JR) – 800 – 2:29.86 (PR) – 3rd

Sara Falcon (JR) – long jump – 12’05 (PR) – 8th, high jump – 4’04 – 9th

Emily Hughes (JR) – 60 – 10.70 (PR) – 16th

Jessica Schnittger – (JR) – 26’09 – 6th

Boys results were:

Cody Prindiville (SR) – 800 – 2:18.65 (PR) – 1ST

Floyd McKendrick (JR) – 60 – 8.67 (PR) – 19th

Alex Boyer (JR) – 200 – 28.53 (PR) – 17th

Reid Waldon (JR) – high jump – 5’02 – 6th, 800 – 2:35.26 – 14th

Billy Moore (SO) – 60 – 7.80 – 9th, long jump – 18’10 (PR) – 5th

Sam Payne (SO) – shot – 32’05 (PR) – 15th

Alex Lawson (SO) – 200 – 27.37 (PR) – 13th

Jimmy Lewsader (FR) – 400 – 1:02.58 (PR) – 15th

Triston Helfert (FR) – high jump – 5’0 (PR) – 8th, 400 – 1:02.61 (PR) – 16th

4X2 relay – Guzier, Lawson, Boyer, Poulos – 1:51.84 (PR)

4X4 relay – Waldon, Prindiville, Helfert, Moore – 4:06.86 (PR) – 5th

The Wildcats begin their outdoor season

after spring break when they travel to Coal City to compete against the host Coalers and the Reed-Custer Comets on Tuesday, April 2. The meet starts at 4:30.

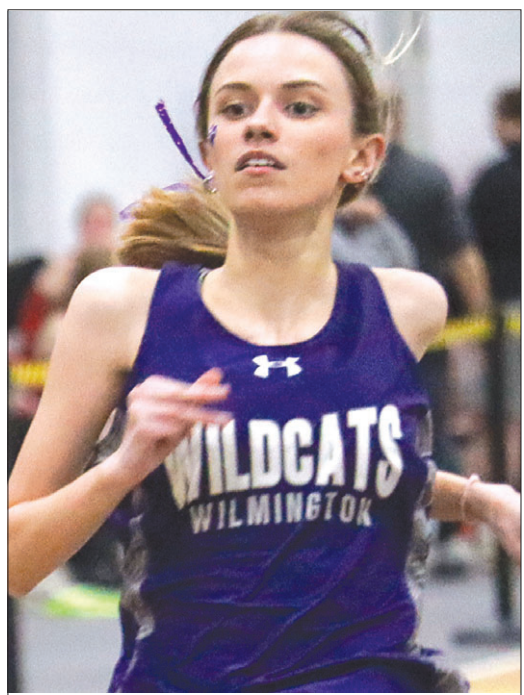


Photo by Zandie Sims

CROSSING THE FINISH line for Wilmington during the indoor meet at Reed-Custer is Emily Hughes.

Lady ‘Cats pound the ball

Two up, two down with hopefully many more to come as the Wilmington varsity softball team downed their first two opponents to start the season.

So far the Lady ‘Cats have scored 30 runs while giving up two while garnering 24 hits in a pair of very lopsided victories.

Wilmington opened the season with a 15-0 win over Grant Park in four innings, scoring nine runs their first time at bat. After scoring two more in the second, three in the third and one in the fourth, the game was call due to the mercy rule.

Freshman Ally Allgood

and sophomore Lexi Strohm combined to pitch the no hitter, Strohm struck out six while Allgood fanned three and walked none during two innings each.

Sophomore Molly Southall hit a 3 run home run and two doubles to finish 4-for-4 with six RBIs. Addison Billingsley went 3-for-3 and scored two runs. Senior Giana Stahlak contributed two hits including a double. Alyssa Johnston, Sami Liaromatis, Allgood and Taryn Talley each had a hit.

Southall homers again

On Tuesday the Lady ‘Cats jumped to a 6-0 lead against Joliet Central to coast to a 15-2

victory.

Southall went 3-for-3 with a three-run home run, a double and four RBIs to lead Wilmington. Taylor Stefancic doubled and singled in a run. Strohm and Allgood hit a double while Nina Egizio and Johnston had a single each.

Strohm pitched three innings, striking out five, walking two and giving up one hit. Allgood was tagged for a couple runs over two innings while giving up one hit, three walks and three Ks.

The Lady ‘Cats travel to Clifton Central Thursday, Dwight on Friday and Reed-Custer Monday. They will host the Lady Comets on Tuesday.