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WILMINGTON, IL | WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2026 | A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER (815) 476-7966

Centennial hype hits Route 66

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

As Route 66 prepares to celebrate its 100th anniversary, longtime Wilmington historian John Weiss is already seeing the results of years of planning.

Weiss, widely known throughout the region for his decades of work promoting the Mother Road, said the buildup to the centennial has brought travelers earlier than usual — and from far beyond the United States.

“The advertising that’s been done, not just by the Heritage Corridor but throughout all eight states, has been paying off,” Weiss said. “Everybody that’s open right now — there’s a lot of people traveling already. More than we would normally have this time of year. And it’s from all over numerous countries.”

For Weiss, who has spent more than three decades guiding visitors along Route 66 and sharing its history, the international interest comes as no surprise. He said many travelers — particularly those from overseas — are drawn by a distinctly American experience.

“In most of the foreign people that come through, they’re looking for Americana,” he said. “That’s what they always say. I’ve been doing this for 36 years, and that’s what they always say in one form or another.”

Chasing Americana

Those who seek Americana via the 2,448 ribbon of Route 66 find it in abundance — not in hyped-up tourist traps, but through the quirky sites locals take for granted.

“The things that they find so fascinating is all our open space,” Weiss

said. “They can drive down the roads and see cornfields and stuff — stuff we take for granted.”

Events like the Red Carpet Corridor Festival — scheduled as part of the Route 66 Centennial celebration on Saturday and Sunday — serve as key moments to bring communities together and showcase the historic route.

Weiss said visitors often assume the centennial year is uniquely special, but the appeal of Route 66 exists year after year.

“They think it’s something special going on now,” he said. “But unless they’re there for a specific thing like the Red Carpet Corridor, they’re having a good time all the time — stopping at this place and that place, taking pictures and having food. That’s what it always is.”

“You don’t really need it to be the 100-year,” he added. “You’ll always have a great time on 66 all the time.”

Surge of visitors

Weiss said businesses and attractions along the corridor are already seeing a surge in visitors, long before the official festival weekend.

While visiting a friend’s business in Gardner recently, he saw firsthand how widespread the interest has become.

“He had about 12 different countries that already stopped at his place just that day,” Weiss said. “It’s amazing.”

That increase in visitors is being noticed at one of the corridor’s best-known landmarks — the Polk-A-Dot Drive in Braidwood.

Judy Ann Chinski said the restaurant has seen increased tourism tied to the centennial excitement, resulting in an uptick in restaurant sales.

“I mean, there’s definitely a lot of tours happening and there’s a lot of stuff going on in the neighborhood,” Chinski said.

“There’s definitely people who are very excited about the 100 years and are doing this because of the 100 years of Route 66.”

While the restaurant typically sees strong traffic during warmer months, she said this year feels especially active.

“We have seen a lot more tourism,” she said. “We see a lot of tourists at this time of year, but there’s definitely been more people around.”

Not all visitors are stopping for meals — some simply want to mug for the camera with Elvis or Superman. So, if you deny your craving for chili cheese fries due to the crowd, take a chance. Lines may be much shorter than anticipated.

“Some of those people are really just here to take pictures and some of them are inside getting food,” she said. “Sometimes people are just staying outside taking pictures, especially with their RVs.”

Chinski added that not all visitors are visiting from across the globe.

“We’ve seen a lot of local tourists lately too — people who are maybe from nearby towns but decided to come see this part of Route 66,” she said. “So it’s been good. There’s been a lot of people around.”

Root beer floats and memorabilia

In Wilmington, activity is building at South Island Park where the Gemini Giant stands sentinel. The park district operates the souvenir shop known as The Landing, where Gemini Giant bobbleheads are selling

SEE ROUTE 66 PAGE 2



VISITORS TRAVELING Route 66 a year ago dressed the part, riding the Red Carpet Corridor in a 1950s pink Cadillac when they stopped in Wilmington. It is the centennial year for the Mother Road.

Partners on patrol

K9 Vox joins Officer Imhoff in protecting the public



Courtesy photo

HUNTER IMHOFF, AN officer with the Wilmington Police Department and partner, Vox, upon completing K9 training at Shallow Creek Kennels in Pennsylvania.

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

A handsome new officer has been making the rounds, stealing the attention away from the rest of the fellows in the Wilmington Police Department. Yet, there’s no apparent resentment since the newby is not only good-looking, but blessed with a genuinely sweet disposition, wagging his tail at everyone he meets.

Vox is a German shorthaired pointer. Wilmington Police Officer Hunter Imhoff has had the good fortune to score Vox as his K9 partner.

Imhoff and Vox recently returned from intensive training in Pennsylvania, marking the beginning of what promises to be a strong partnership built on trust, confidence and steady preparation.

For Imhoff, the past several weeks have been defined by learning not only how to command a working dog, but how to function as half of a tightly connected team.

Imhoff traveled to Pennsylvania to train at

SEE VOX PAGE 2

City administrator bids residents a farewell

BY JEANNINE SMITH
SPECIAL TO THE
FREE PRESS ADVOCATE

Over the past four years, the City of Wilmington has experienced a period of meaningful progress and transformation—one that cannot be attributed to any single individual. These accomplishments are the result of a talented and dedicated team of employees, a supportive Mayor and City Council, an engaged community, and strong collaboration with local, county, state, and federal partners.

Together, we have strengthened Wilmington’s foundation while positioning the city for long-term success—honoring our past and embracing our future as a proud Route 66 community.

From Stabilization to Strength

When I began my role in 2022, the focus was clear: Listen, learn, and build a stronger organizational foundation. Early efforts centered on improving communication, establishing consistent reporting, and strengthening coordination across departments and partner agencies.

At the same time, the



JEANNINE SMITH

City faced significant financial challenges, including limited account oversight, incomplete audits, and inconsistent procedures. Working collaboratively with staff, we:

- Reorganized all financial accounts and eliminated unauthorized access
- Implemented monthly reconciliations and proper accounting practices
- Corrected audit deficiencies and brought the City back into compliance
- Established clear financial policies and internal controls

These actions restored financial integrity and cre-

ated a stable framework to support Wilmington’s future.

Growth and new business investment

With a stronger foundation in place, Wilmington experienced renewed economic activity and business growth across the community.

New businesses welcomed over the past four years include: Abby’s Closet, Art on 66 (Art Gallery), Battle City Gym Cards & Collectibles, Blue Horse Wine & Martini Bar, Covet Consignment Boutique, Handcrafted Pet Spa, Love’s Travel Center and Hardee’s, Oil Changers, The Garage on Water, Red Clover Esthetics and Silver Lily Tattoos, The Landing Pad (visitor and Route 66 souvenir destination), The Scoop Ice Cream Shop, The Wine Cafe, and Van Mack Electric Co.

In 2024 alone, Wilmington saw more than \$371 million in construction investment, including major industrial, commercial, and residential development.

SEE FAREWELL PAGE 2



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WHEN BUYING 2

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Route 66, continued from page 1

like hot cakes.

Wilmington Island Park District Director Kirsten VanDuyne said traffic has noticeably increased.

“Every time we go to The Landing, there are people there,” VanDuyne said. “Tours are calling to ask for extended hours. There’s just so much happening over there.”

The shop’s most popular item reflects Wilmington’s most recognizable landmark.

“Our biggest item is the bobblehead, hands down,” VanDuyne said,

Demand has been so strong that additional inventory is being ordered ahead of the Red Carpet Corridor weekend.

“We’re getting low right now and doing a whole restock for this weekend,” she said.

The park district is planning several activities to coincide with the weekend crowds, particularly near the Gemini Giant.

On Saturday, visitors can expect appearances by an ice cream truck offering special Route 66-themed floats served in commemorative centennial cups. Face painting is also planned beginning late morning to welcome visitors walking between parking areas and the downtown flea market.

Sunday events will include the Rotary Club’s Sip and Stroll at the Gemini Giant site, featuring raffles, live music, art displays and beverage tastings.

“We’ve got a big weekend at the Giant coming up and the town can be proud of the display,” VanDuyne said.

As a patriarch of the Mother Road, John Weiss worries about her future. Despite his enthusiasm for the centennial, Weiss said his thoughts are already turning to what happens after the celebration ends.

Many communities have spent years preparing for the milestone year, building anticipation and attracting new visitors. But Weiss worries the intense focus on the anniversary may lead to a drop-off once the celebrations pass.

“So many people have been planning now for this 100-year, and they’re coming,” Weiss said. “I don’t know what’s going to happen next year when it’s back to normal — and yet it’s the same thing.”

Vox, continued from page 1

the world-renowned Shallow Creek Kennels, where they spent four weeks developing skills needed for real-world law enforcement.

During that time, the pair focused on narcotic odor recognition, tracking, and article searches—core duties for a police K9 team. They worked under conditions mirroring situations they may encounter on patrol.

“We trained in multiple environments, including schools, vehicles, buildings, and open areas, preparing us for real-world situations,” Imhoff explained. “Shallow Creek is a first-class training facility, and I really enjoyed my time there.”

Those environments forced both handler and canine to adapt quickly, sharpening their communication and building familiarity under pressure. It was not simply about teaching Vox commands—it was learning how to move together, read each other’s signals, and respond confidently as a unit.

While the technical skills learned during training were essential, Imhoff said he learned other important lessons.

“One of the biggest things I learned while at Shallow Creek was the importance of having confidence as a K9 team,” he said.

Although the pair has only been working together for approximately six weeks, Imhoff says their trust in each other has grown rapidly. That bond was tested on the final day of training, when the team completed a national certification—an important

milestone marking their readiness together.

Reflecting on that moment, Imhoff shared a lighthearted but meaningful observation: “On the last day of training, I told the trainers, Vox certified me.”

He added that the experience has already reshaped how he approaches his role as a handler.

“Vox has already taught me so much about being a handler. As our bond continues to grow, our confidence will continue to build.”

Since returning to Wilmington, Officer Imhoff has begun learning more about Vox’s personality outside of formal training settings—and one trait stands out immediately.

“One thing I have learned about Vox since returning home is how much he loves people,” Imhoff said. “Every person he sees he is excited to meet.”

That outgoing personality is more than just charming—it strengthens community connections. Police K9 teams often serve as ambassadors during public events, school visits, and demonstrations, helping residents—especially children—feel comfortable approaching officers.

Imhoff also noted that working with Vox has reinforced an important lesson about perseverance.

“Vox has also taught me how learning new things can be challenging, but having each other to lean on is important,” he said.

That sense of partnership is essential in K9 work, where handler and dog rely heavily on trust.

Coming to a cruiser near you

Although Vox has already com-

pleted national-level certification, the team is still preparing for one final step before becoming fully operational in Illinois.

“Vox and I have not worked on any cases yet,” Imhoff explained. “We just returned home last week. We have to complete the Illinois K9 certification before we can begin working.”

Until that certification is complete, Vox will continue reporting to duty alongside Imhoff, taking part in daily training sessions to maintain skills and reinforce discipline.

That continued preparation ensures the team is fully ready when the time comes to assist in investigations, searches and narcotics detection.

For Wilmington residents, the arrival of K9 Vox represents more than the addition of another specialized police tool. It marks the start of a relationship—between officer and dog, and between the K9 team and the community they will serve.

Though they have yet to take part in their first official case, the groundwork has already been laid through weeks of rigorous training, long hours of practice, and the early formation of trust between handler and partner.

With Vox’s eagerness to meet people and Imhoff’s steady commitment to mastering the role of handler, the newest team in the Wilmington Police Department is preparing carefully for the responsibilities ahead.

And as their confidence continues to grow, so too will their readiness to serve the Wilmington community—side by side.

Farewell, continued from page 1

opment.

Wilmington’s identity along historic Route 66 has played a central role in this momentum. Through partnerships with the Heritage Corridor Destinations Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Joliet Area Historical Museum, the City has strengthened its visibility as a destination community. Participation in the annual Red Carpet

Corridor event continues to bring thousands of visitors to Wilmington each year, supporting local businesses and reinforcing its place along this iconic corridor.

Leveraging \$7.4 Million in Grant Funding

A cornerstone of Wilmington’s progress has been the aggressive pursuit of grant funding. Over the past several years, the City has secured more than

\$7.4 million in grants, allowing major projects to move forward while minimizing the impact on local taxpayers. For a complete list of grants, please visit <https://wilmington-il.gov/grant>.

Key grant-funded projects include:

- \$2,000,000 ARPA Grant -- Water main replacement and sewer lining on Main Street and Kankakee Street
- \$500,000 ARPA Grant --Backup potable water source (Well No. 4)
- \$335,000 Federal FLAP Grant --Multi-use path connecting Abraham Lincoln Cemetery, Midewin, and the Kankakee River (in design phase)
- \$250,000 DCEO Grant --Security upgrades and electronic access control at City Hall and Police Department, along with a citywide marketing plan

- \$80,000 IDNR Grant— North Island kayak launch (in partnership with Will County Forest Preserve)
- \$75,000 JADA Contribution —Comprehensive Plan and Master Parks Plan
- \$67,250 CDBG Grant —Civic Center roof replacement
- \$40,000 Route 66 Grants (2023)—Downtown mural and monument signage
- \$109,000 Route 66 Grant (2024) —LED welcome sign at South Island
- \$90,000 Route 66 Grant (2025) – Monument Park enhancements and mural improvements
- \$250,000 Route 66 Grant (2026) —Monument signage and EV charging infrastructure

These investments have strengthened infrastructure, enhanced public safety, expanded recreational opportunities, and reinforced Wilmington’s identity as a Route 66 destination.

The City has made substantial progress in modernizing infrastructure and improving service delivery:

- Increased water system accountability 20 percent, reducing loss and improving efficiency
- Created a pavement management system to guide long-term road improvements
- Invested \$2.5 million in local street resurfacing projects
- Completed sewer lining and watermain upgrades in the downtown core
- Initiated the Ridgeport water and sewer extension project to support future growth

particularly along the Kankakee River and within the Island Park system.

Key improvements include:

- Development of South Island Monument Park, featuring signage, murals, and landscaping
- Construction of new recreational amenities, including the South Island playground, future bike path, disc golf course, and the North Island kayak launch (under construction)
- Installation of security cameras and infrastructure upgrades at park facilities

Community events continue to grow as well. The Let Freedom Rock event now attracts approximately 4,000 attendees annually, while Wilmington’s participation in the Red Carpet Corridor further elevates the City’s regional, national, and international visibility.

The progress Wilmington has achieved over the past four years reflects a true team effort—driven by dedicated employees, strong leadership from the Mayor and City Council, and the support of the community.

As I prepare to step away from my role as City Administrator, I do so with deep gratitude and confidence in Wilmington’s future. The City is in excellent hands with our Mayor, City Council, and the exceptional team of employees who serve this community every day.

Wilmington is currently in the process of appointing an interim administrator while the mayor and city council conduct a thoughtful search for a permanent city administrator in the coming months. I am confident this transition will be smooth and that the City will continue its strong upward trajectory.

It has been a true honor to serve this community. Wilmington will always hold a special place in my heart, and I look forward to watching its continued success along the historic Route 66 corridor for years to come.

Attorney Kholodovsky files petition for guardianship

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

Estate of Radmir Abbasov, a minor. Case # 2026GR000081

Notice of Guardianship Petition

Public Notice is hereby given to Mizladdin Chinnigzkhonov that on 05/19/2026, 09:00 a.m., or soon thereafter as counsel may be heard, I shall appear before the Honorable Judge sitting in room R002 at River Valley Justice Center, 3200 McDonough St, Joliet, IL 60431, petitioning to become the lawful guardian of the above-named minor.

Dated April 07, 2026 /s/ Feride Bakal

Attorney Brian J. Kholodovsky 1 Northfield Plaza, Suite 502, Northfield, Illinois 60093 (847) 579-9989 brian@bjrg.law

Published in The Free Press Advocate, Wednesday, April 22, 29, and May 6, 2026.

Meents Law P.C. files David 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 OLIVER WEBSTER DAVID, JR., Deceased;

No. 2026 PR 145

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Oliver Webster David, Jr., Letters of Office as Independent Administrator were issued on April 16, 2026, to Nancy Beth David, whose address is 23448 West Coal City Road, Wilmington, Illinois 60481; whose attorney is Meents Law, P.C., 25158 West Eames Street, Unit A, Channahon, Illinois 60410. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at the Will County Courthouse, 100 West Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, on or before October 30, 2026, 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/fag/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.

Nancy Beth David Independent Administrator of the Estate of Oliver Webster David, Jr., 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, April 29, May 6 and 13, 2026.

District 209U seeking bids for 2026-2027 milk

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice is hereby given that the Wilmington Community Unit School District 209U, Will County, Wilmington, Illinois will receive bids to furnish milk for the 2026-2027 school year. Bid specifications may be obtained upon request from the Office of the Superintendent, Wilmington Community Unit School District No. 209U, 209U Wildcat Court, Wilmington, IL 60481 - Phone (815) 926-1751. All bids are to be received in the Office of the Superintendent at the above address on or before 2:00 P.M. CDST, Tuesday, May 12, 2026, and will be opened publicly at that time. The Board of Education will make its decision on Monday, June 8, 2026, and reserves the right to waive any technicalities or irregularities and to reject any or all bids or any part or parts thereof.

By and for the Board of Education
Wilmington Community Unit School District 209U

Peggy Kunz, Secretary,
Board of Education

Published in The Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, April 29 and May 6, 2026.

Meents Law P.C. files Couch 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 DONNA MARIE COUCH, Deceased;

No. 2026 PR 159

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of DONNA MARIE COUCH, Letters of Office as Independent Administrator was issued on April 16, 2026, to Ellen Elizabeth Georgeff, whose address is 1625 Meadowview Ln., Wilmington, IL 60481; whose attorney is Meents Law, P.C., 25158 West Eames Street, Unit A, Channahon, Illinois 60410. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at the Will County Courthouse, River Valley Justice Center, 3208 W. McDonough Street, Joliet, Illinois 60431, or with the representative, or both, on or before October 30, 2026, 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/fag/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.

Ellen Elizabeth Georgeff Independent Administrator of the Estate of DONNA MARIE COUCH, Deceased

Dylan J. Hakey
Meents Law, P.C.
25158 W. Eames Street, Unit A
Channahon, Illinois 60410
Telephone: (815) 534-9515
Facsimile: (815) 534-9516
Attorney Code: 6352259
E-mail: Dylan@MeentsLaw.com

Published in The Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, April 29, May 6 and 13, 2026.

Attorney Gorcowski files Coleman 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 DELORES J. COLEMAN, Deceased; No. 2026 PR 115

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given the creditors of the death of DELORES J. COLEMAN, deceased January 17, 2025 of 716 Parkwood Dr., Joliet, IL, the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois, entered an order issuing letters of office to Audrey E. Helm-Weaver, dated March 11, 2026, whose address is 716 Parkwood Dr., Joliet, IL and appointing her Independent Executor with Will annexed of the Estate of DELORES J. COLEMAN.

Notice is given that a Petition may be filed within 42 days after the date of said Order admitting said Will to probate to the Probate Act, as amended, and within six months after March 11, 2026, the date of the appointment of the said Audrey E. Helm-Weaver as Independent Executor with Will annexed, a petition may be filed in the above-entitled proceeding to contest the validity of said Will under Section 8-1 of said Probate Act, as amended.

Notice of said Petition and Order is hereby given to the heirs-at-law of said Delores J. Coleman, Deceased, namely: ERIC COLEMAN; AUDEY E. HELM-WEAVER; AJAY-LA COLEMAN; JEREMY COLEMAN, II and POSSIBLE UNKNOWN HEIRS.

Claims against the Estate may be filed within six months from the date of first publication. Claims not filed within three months from the date of mailing or delivery of Notice to Creditor, whichever is later, shall be barred. Claims must be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson St., Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both. 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/fag/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.

Audrey E. Helm-Weaver, Independent Executor with the Will annexed of the Estate of Delores J. Coleman, Deceased.

Michael N. Gorcowski
Attorney Number: 03129116
8 W. Cass Street, Joliet, IL 60432
815/740-5900 - 815/740-5903 (fax)
mng@gorcowskilaw.net

Published in The Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, April 15, 22 and 29, 2026.

Attorney Gorcowski files Coleman 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 DELORES J. COLEMAN, Deceased; No. 2026 PR 115

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Audrey E. Helm-Weaver, Independent Executor with the Will annexed of the Estate of Delores J. Coleman, Deceased.

Wilmington has made meaningful investments in parks and public spaces,



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: \$46 Grundy & Will counties; \$53 other Illinois counties and \$60 out of state

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher

Not what they appear to be

Starting with the snake in the Garden of Eden, the world has always had con artists. And there can be no doubt that Wilmington has had more than her share, especially during the 1870's and 1880's.

We will examine just two months, March and April of 1880, and look at two cons that were luckily exposed before doing too much damage. The first takes place in March in Braidwood. It involves Prof. A.B. James alias A.B. Remington.

Mr. Remington was 33 years old and an exceptionally good-looking man. He had wavy black hair and stood over six feet tall. He dressed well. His manner was smooth. As Editor Conley put it, "Just the sort of a fellow to make an impression upon the hearts of unsophisticated maid-

ens." Prof. James, the name he gave when he arrived in town, was a representative of W.W. Kimball & Co of Chicago. He spent several months in Braidwood selling organs and giving lessons "when the surrounding circumstances were agreeable." He was undone when Mr. Seavy, an agent for the company, arrived in Braidwood to collect the money for organs Professor James had sold to many in the area.

Prof. James seemed happy to see the agent at first, got him settled at the Caledonian hotel, and left him there, while he went to get the funds to settle up with him. The next thing you know, Prof James was "high-tailing it" on foot for

Gardner. He made the eight miles in a record 45 minutes, in the rain.

He then got on the train and went to Dwight, Pontiac, Joliet, Kankakee, St. Anne, and Watseka, in that order. He ended up on the farm of a Mr. Miller, three miles from Milford. Where he "made himself quite agreeable to two pretty buxom daughters of Mr. Miller."

Meanwhile, Mr. Seavy, smelling a rat, obtained an arrest warrant from Deputy Sheriff Stewart, who started out after the good professor. It took him a week to sniff him out, but the good professor was brought to justice. He was sentenced to the Will County Jail for swindling. It was only afterward that the entire story came out.

It seems that Prof. James had borrowed money from at least a dozen people in the area. He had also "shoved the queer" (passed counterfeit money) to the railroad conductors. His trunk was searched for counterfeit money. None was found, but something else was.

A number of curls, ladies' photos, and a list of his social contacts was found. From the evidence he was engaged to be married to no less than "two ladies in Gardner, two in Manteno, one in Braidwood, two in Custer, one in Watseka, and more counties are yet to be heard



Sandy Vasko

from." School marm's daughters were special pets of his. Deputy Stewart said that from the evidence he gathered, "the chap had been criminally intimate with at least a dozen women within a radius of thirty miles."

The second scam revolved around a new product called "glucose." Glucose is found in most green plants and is the chief source of energy in most living organisms. The technology had just been discovered to turn starch, in this case cornstarch, into glucose sugar and syrup, by treating it with acid under steam pressure. A "sugar meal" and liquid corn syrup was the result. This was found to be excellent feed for stock, especially dairy cattle. Major operations were opened in Davenport, Iowa and Geneva, Illinois. Those factories employed over 100 people.

In April of 1880 a Mr. Taylor came to Wilmington. He distributed thousands of flyers regarding his proposed "glucose works". He claimed to "be looking over" several sights, but Wilmington had the edge over all others. He had only one condition that the locals had to comply with, and the factory would start production immediately. He asked that the town erect a stone or brick build-

ing of certain dimensions, at a cost of a mere \$25,000 (\$848,500) to \$35,000 (1,187,700). He would give out bonds in his company to those who invested, payable in five years at six per cent interest. The bonds would be exchangeable for sugar meal.

A mass meeting of farmers was held, at which Mr. Taylor said that if Wilmington was not interested, Kankakee was chomping at the bit to help him out. But something struck Editor Conley as wrong. Having been swindled just a few years earlier by John Daniels, he was leery of any get rich quick schemes. So he did a little checking around.

He found that Mr. Taylor was formerly the President of the Fourth National Bank of Chicago, which had gone under. And while Mr. Taylor had indeed incorporated a glucose company in Springfield, there was little or no money behind it. It seems that his plan was to get a free building, and then mortgage it, and then, with that money, buy machinery. He would then mortgage the machinery to but the corn needed to produce the sugar meal, etc.

Needless to say, the town showed Mr. Taylor the road out. A glucose works did start up in town using the old mill on the island. Local farmers George Bez and John E. Fisher started it modestly, only 500 bushels of corn a day. It ran for several years before going out of business.

as the Wicked Witch, Sawyer Jandura as Frankenstein, and Cole Long as Huckleberry Finn.

Behind the scenes, Sarai Duran serves as stage manager, with set design by Peter Panepinto. Costumes are designed by Shirley Lundemo, while Nathaniel Quesada and Katelynn Dedo oversee lighting and sound, respectively.

The production also includes a student crew featuring Brynne Ryder, Marlee Zak, Aurora Nelson, Skylar McGonagle and Claire Hall, along with support from school organizations and community members.



RACHEL SMITH



DELANEY REDWITZ

Meet the WHS Seniors

ISABEL BRAJAS
WHS STUDENT REPORTER

The Free Press Advocate features members from the Wilmington High School class of 2026. This week we're featuring Rachel Smith and Delaney Redwitz who completed our questionnaire.

Rachel Smith

What do you plan to pursue upon graduation? I'm going to Lewis University to play volleyball and continue schooling. I'm majoring in health-care

What is one thing most people don't know about you? I have three older siblings

What is your best habit? Hardwork

Your favorite thing to eat on the school lunch menu? Pizza

One thing you refuse to eat? Seafood

A sport or club that made an impact on you and why? Volleyball has taught me mental toughness, leadership and hard work

Famous person (dead or alive) you would like to meet and why? Salvatore brothers TVD my favorite show

If you could travel anywhere, where would you go? Hawaii, I like tropical places and it looks pretty

If you could create a class, what would it be? Cooking, I think it's helpful for when you're independent to have skills and it would be enjoyable

Teacher shoutout? Mrs.Morrison. She's very nice and you can tell she cares. I really enjoy going to her classes and I think she's a good human.

What advice would you give to the underclassman? Make memories and participate. It goes by fast so enjoy it all and appreciate the little things.

Delaney Redwitz

What do you plan to pursue upon graduation? I want to become a physical or occupational therapist

What is one thing most people don't know about you? That I'm very talkative

What is your best habit? Always being there for my friends

Your favorite thing to eat on the school lunch menu? Mini corn dogs and Mac-cheese

One thing you refuse to eat? Chicken alfredo

A sport or club that made an impact on you and why? Yearbook because it showed me I have a passion for taking pictures

Famous person (dead or alive) you would like to meet and why? Morgan Wallen, I love his music

If you could travel anywhere, where would you go? Paris, France or Greece

If you could create a class, what would it be? Culinary class

Teacher shoutout? Mr.Miller

What advice would you give to the underclassman? These four years go by so fast so have fun and live life to its fullest.

Memorial Day parade, ceremony planned

Community members are invited to honor the nation's fallen service members during a Memorial Day parade and ceremony scheduled for Saturday, May 23, in Wilmington.

The annual event, presented by American Legion Post 191 and its Ladies Auxilliary, will begin with parade lineup at 10:30 a.m. in the Grundy Bank parking lot. The parade will step off at 11 a.m., traveling south on Water Street before concluding at Memorial Park on Vine Street, where a ceremony honoring veterans will be held.

Volunteers are being sought to help create a flag line along the parade route.

For more information contact Peggy Kunz Dore at 815-545-0720.

WMS to present 'The Enchanted Bookshop'

Wilmington Middle School students will take the stage for their upcoming production of "The Enchanted Bookshop," a whimsical play written by Todd Wallinger, set to be performed in the school's AP Room at 6 p.m. Thursday.

The production, directed by Jennifer Loveland with assistance from Reagan Mossell, will run approximately 60 minutes and feature two acts with a brief intermission.

The play brings to life a variety of beloved literary characters, and the middle school cast features a wide range of student performers in key roles.

Among the cast, Piper Proffitt will portray Margie, while Kailey Sukle takes on the role of Bombalurina. William Panepinto appears as Eddie, and Jayce Strong

plays Fingers. Gracelynn Johnson stars as Dorothy Gale, with Tandon Sukle as Sherlock Holmes and Brayden Brockman as Robin Hood.

Additional cast members include Ana Carroll as Pollyanna, Abbie Long as Heidi and Karington Smith as Tom Sawyer. Lilly Donnelly will appear as the Book Fairy, while Julian Subach takes on the role of Officer Ketchum.

Chloe Eisenhour plays Mom, with Aiden Guzman as Timmy. Sophie Palmer appears as the Lady in Red, Fiona Medlin as Long John Silver, and Cheyenne Deane as Doctor Dolittle. Makenzie Huffer will portray Hopalong Cassidy, while Morgan Robison takes on the role of Fagin.

Rounding out the cast are Devyn Pomykala as the Queen of Hearts, Rose Krug

as the Wicked Witch, Sawyer Jandura as Frankenstein, and Cole Long as Huckleberry Finn.

Behind the scenes, Sarai Duran serves as stage manager, with set design by Peter Panepinto. Costumes are designed by Shirley Lundemo, while Nathaniel Quesada and Katelynn Dedo oversee lighting and sound, respectively.

The production also includes a student crew featuring Brynne Ryder, Marlee Zak, Aurora Nelson, Skylar McGonagle and Claire Hall, along with support from school organizations and community members.

WHS Prom is Saturday

BY ISABEL BRAJAS
WHS STUDENT REPORTER

It's a big weekend for WHS seniors and juniors as the annual Spring Prom will take place with the theme of *Midnights in Rio*.

This year's prom will be held Saturday at the Morris County Club.

Prom planner is Brianna Keane, the WHS sophomore and junior English teacher who spoke about how she loves coordinating prom and all the details that come along with it.

"I think I could've been a party planner in another life," joked Keane.

Of all the beautiful

prom venues that Keane has planned, her favorite was held at CD & Me near Frankfort due to the little pond and firepits they had.

She said one of the biggest rewards for planning prom is when couples, on their way out, often express their thanks.

WHS had tickets for prom on sale last week costing \$60 per person, giving students the option of naming up to 10 people at the same table.

Each student is allowed to bring one date, whether from WHS or from a different school. Students who bring someone outside of school required a guest form filled out and

turned in to the office.

Beginning at 3 p.m. Saturday, a Prom Walk will be held in the WHS main gym where students can walk down the red carpet and pose for photos taken in front of backdrops. It's held as a part of prom to given parents the opportunity to take photos and no parents are allowed at the prom venue.

Doors at the Morris Country Club open at 5:45 through 6:15. Once seated at their designated tables a dinner will be served, followed by dancing. The event will conclude 10 p.m.

Keane hopes it turns into a memorable prom night for all.

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Consumers get bupkis

SHADOW LAKES— The Supreme Court declared Trump's tariffs unconstitutional. This is old news, the new news is that refund checks will be going out soon to the people, or I should say companies, that pay the tariffs. All American companies in our towns and in our cities. My question for all those fools that always justify Pinocchio's lies. How do you feel now that you know that it wasn't China paying the tariffs? The sad part in all this is that we the consumers that ended up paying the tariffs are not getting anything.

Incompetent liars

COAL CITY— The Sound-Off column on April 22, there was an article that talked about what government employees can do to ruin your life. I would like to thank whoever put that article in the paper because every bit of it is true. This has been happening for almost 50 years in U.S.A. in both state and federal government employees. They receive too much money for their service and too many benefits for the work that they do. And it is even more true for elected public servants. There is a phrase that fits every government employee and that phrase is "The hardest part of doing nothing is knowing when you're through." All the public servants do, including politicians, is sit around and try to appear busy while they're trying to figure out new ways to do nothing and get paid good money to do it. And this goes for every state in the U.S.A. Try and get something from either the state or federal department of Veterans affairs is a useless cause. So many of the public servants are lazy and incompetent individuals that commit crimes and are never put behind bars.

Promote democracy

WILMINGTON— I just finished reading the Sound Off column this afternoon. I always find it very interesting and have something to say but this is the first time that I have read the whole complete column and I agree with the complete column 100%. Whoever wrote this column hit right on the head and I applaud them. Somehow we need to do something. Maybe you folks that do something with the paper can get people out and about our democracy. It seems everybody has forgot about our democracy. I'm a home bound Veteran and I wish I could get out and but I can't. I guess what I'm saying is maybe we can get someone at the paper to remind everybody about our democracy and help us keep going. We don't need people like the Trump and Vance in our world. And I'm telling you right now I'm worried about Pritzker, he's getting weird.

I'm really afraid I'm going to lose my democracy. I'm afraid I served my country and it was for nothing and I don't want to feel that way. I agree with your column 100% keep it up. This week was beautiful. Let's sound off a little bit about Trump and Vance business. That man is going to kill us. If we didn't have somebody. He's going to do us in. He does not believe in democracy, he said he does but he doesn't. And please someone write him a note about stop being a prayer person. That man no more likes going to church or reading his bible then the man on the moon. On behalf of everyone else that reads this column today it's beautiful. And yeah, yeah democracy. And you guys get it in your paper, do something to rouse people up about democracy. Right now people don't seem to think about it.

Catnapping president

WILMINGTON—Last Thursday Trump held an Oval Office press conference with his Cabinet members standing behind. As the Health Secretary Bobby Kennedy (vax denier, toilet seat coke sniffer, heroin addict) was comically trying to explain percentages when the president's head was completely resting on his right shoulder with eyes shut for over 13 consecutive seconds. No cabinet member dared to awaken the elderly "Derelict in-Chief." He is awake at 2, 3 and 4 in the morning to tweet delusional thoughts of being the king of all us paupers and he being the globally recognized Superstar but when defending his multiple failing policies and underestimated war, he suddenly catnaps? So presidential. It will take decades to unravel and apologize for all the and disgrace he has brought upon America. He conned his voters. And the Epstein files aren't going away. He even campaigned on their release, or was that just a hoax?

No right to bear arms

SHADOW LAKE—I was wondering, just why the Iranian people have not overthrown their government? And then it dawned on me, they have no second amendment. Kind of something to remember. Obediently,

Margot Lane

Fear is his shtick

WILMINGTON— This is week nine of Trump/Epstein/Iran War. Originally he said a few days then two to four weeks. He tore up a verified working treaty in 2017 out of jealousy of its author. Over 100 American inspectors were allowed accessibility to visually monitor all production facilities and resources and it was working flawlessly. Without this Treaty, Iran and no protection from Trump aggression, they



over \$55 billion dollars later, 14 Americans perished, 40% of Tomahawk ballistic missiles spent, Strait of Hormuz in daily chaos, three aircraft carriers stationed in harms way we are squarely in another quagmire. Similar to Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan which were no win conflicts just death, wasting billion\$ and humiliation. He created this mess as another Epstein distraction and now trying to save face with American voters. His imagination intentionally stokes fear in every single voter of his. That's always been his shtick. Everyone, everything is the boogyman. We can't afford this administration, though maybe the Wilmington billionaire\$ can.

Leave files alone

DIAMOND—I see that Whoopi Goldberg is in the Epstein files. Does this mean she is a pedophile? Of course not. Rich people hang around with rich people. Athletes tend to hang around with athletes and so on. So you have one demented individual in one of these groups and all are assumed guilty? The majority of the Department of Justice's files on Epstein remain unpublished. Why? It is not because of one person it is because all of the people in those files want it left unpublished. Could you imagine 30 years later you have to explain to your immediate family why there is a picture of you with him? Will they believe you were just at a party and someone took that picture? Maybe, but maybe not. Also, when someone wants to believe that to fit their agenda, they will spread the word. That is why the files on Epstein remain unpublished.

What next?

WILMINGTON—Rumor has it that Draft Dodge - in - Chief is considering awarding himself the Congressional Medal of Honor. No one knows if he is kidding or not because this narcissist has no sense of humor. While he is at it, why not award himself a Purple Heart, too? He has fantasized that he wants one of these, too. After all, everyone knows he was legitimately shot at a Pennsylvania rally. And miraculously, the cartilage grew back on his ear. Maybe he can give himself the Presidential Medal of Freedom for, among other things, major contributions to medicine, too.

Power is money

WILMINGTON—Interesting week.

We find out the California Democratic rep is a rapist. When not running for governor the party knew, but he was there. Trump attack dog. The SPLC, the right arm of the Democratic Party is giving money to the KKK and right wing hate groups to get donations. And last but not least a Democratic no kings protester tries to kill the president. Democrats do anything for power because power is money.

Stop the madman

WILMINGTON—Let's quit beating around the bush and end this quagmire. Our European allies consider Trump a "dangerous and corrupt gangster" and Americans are fed up with the pain that Trump is inflicting at home and abroad. The International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands investigates war criminals and in the 1990's sentenced commanders, soldiers and policemen of the Balkan wars to years behind bars. But here in America Trump is a slippery, slimy fish who has corrupted our justice system. We therefore need the distinguished judges who specialize in war crimes and preside over international criminal courts to mete out full justice to Trump. Such a move has never before been necessary for any American president but Trump is monstrous. He is a madman and a threat to civilization itself and needs to be stopped.

Irene

Most corrupt in office

WILMINGTON—Big Oil Corporations spent \$96M in donations to elect DJ Trump and over \$300M to various Republican Congressional candidates—you don't donate that much without expecting a return favor. Trump is trying to eliminate wind and solar power which accounts for 20% of this country's source. Its considered inexpensive power. By eliminating this cheap power all Americans are forced to make up for that loss by using expensive oil thus repayment for campaign contributions. The whole administration is by far the most corrupt ever in office. Those are undisputed facts.

Another con job

WILMINGTON—So the president can go to various UFC fight locations with 15,000 other people but suddenly the gaudy ballroom must immediately be built without necessary congressional approval. Another con job.

Mother's Day perennial seed packets at libraries

In time for Mother's Day, the Grundy County libraries will have seed packets that will grow a variety of pollinator flowers that are native to our region 5 area. Each library will receive a good number of seed packets, but they will

only be available until supplies run out.

Practice the fourth R which is Respect for our earth and the pollinators that help us in so many ways.

Seeds will be distributed to each of the libraries

by May 1, at the following library locations:

Morris Public Library, 604 Liberty Street.

Coal City Public Library, 85 N. Garfield Street

Fossil Ridge Library, 386 W. Kennedy. Braidwood

started producing uranium again. Now,

Meents Law P.C. files
Rogers 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 ELLEN MARIE ROGERS,
Deceased;
No. 2026 PR 120

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Ellen Marie Rogers, Letters of Office as Independent Executor was issued on April 9, 2026, to William J. Rogers, whose address is 4307 Renaissance Drive #219, San Jose, CA 95134; 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, River Valley Justice Center, 3208 West McDonough Street, Joliet, IL 60432, or with the representative, or both, on or before October 20, 2026, 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.

William J. Rogers
Independent Executor of the Estate
of Ellen Marie Rogers, Deceased

Dylan J. Hakey
Meents Law, P.C.
25158 W Eames St, Unit A
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Published in the Free Press
Advocate on Wednesday, April 15, 22
and 29, 2026.

Meents Law P.C. files
Jessen 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 HENRY JOSEPH JESSEN III,
Deceased; No. 2025 PR 684

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Henry Joseph Jessen III, Letters of Office as Independent Executor were issued on March 30, 2026, to Kristi A. Hornyak, whose address is 12775 County Road 5, Delta, Ohio 43515; 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 October 16, 2026, 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.

Kristi A. Hornyak
Independent Executor of the Estate
of Henry Joseph Jessen III,
Deceased

Frank J. Meents
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Published in the Free Press
Advocate on Wednesday, April 15, 22,
and 29, 2026.

Meents Law P.C. files
Garrett 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 DENNIS GARRETT,
Deceased;
No. 2026 PR 179

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Dennis Garrett, Letters of Office as Independent Executor was issued on April 17, 2026, to Rebecca J. Beasley, whose address is 217 N McIntyre Street, Wilmington, Illinois 60481; 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, River Valley Justice Center, 3208 W. McDonough Street, Joliet, IL 60435, or with the representative, or both, on or before October 30, 2026, 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.

Rebecca J. Beasley
Independent Executor of the Estate
of Dennis Garrett, Deceased

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Published in the Free Press
Advocate on Wednesday, April 29,
May 6 and 13, 2026.

First ever carbon monoxide report counts 57 deaths yearly

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has issued its first-ever carbon monoxide surveillance report, detailing all known unintentional carbon monoxide (CO) exposures in the state from 2019-2023.

Data from the report will help state and local officials work on targeted public information and education efforts and other interventions to help Illinoisans avoid emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and deaths resulting from carbon monoxide exposure.

"Carbon monoxide poisoning can be a silent killer, but it is also completely preventable," said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. "Simple steps like installing and maintaining carbon monoxide alarms and checking appliances can save lives. This first-ever report gives us the tools and strategies to act now, protecting Illinois families and preventing these tragedies before they happen."

"In 2024, Illinois fire departments responded to 9,860 carbon monox-

ide-related calls across our state. These numbers serve as a powerful reminder that carbon monoxide remains a serious and potentially deadly threat in our homes.

"The good news is that prevention is simple, working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms save lives," said Illinois State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow. "Regularly testing your alarms, checking expiration dates, and replacing units that are broken or outdated is your strongest line of defense against accidental carbon monoxide poisoning or worse."

Among the key findings in the report:

- Over the five years of the study, carbon monoxide exposures resulted in an average of 940 emergency department (ED) visits, 126 hospital admissions, and nearly 57 deaths annually in Illinois.
- While unintentional CO exposures are most common during cold weather months from October to March, they can and do happen at any time of the year.
- Among the most

common sources of unintentional carbon monoxide exposures are fire and smoke; malfunctioning or improperly ventilated furnaces, gas stoves, water heaters, or other appliances; exhaust from vehicles running in garages or other enclosed spaces; generators operating indoors without proper ventilation or operating outdoors too close to open windows; and gas-powered tools like saws or power washers being operated indoors or in unventilated spaces.

- Fire departments responded to more than 50,000 total carbon monoxide incidents statewide in the five-year period, with 95% of them occurring in residential settings.
- CO incidents were more likely to occur on Sunday than any other day of the week, and more likely to happen in the evening hours (6 p.m.-midnight). Both findings reflect times when people were more likely to be home and using furnaces, appliances, or other potential sources of carbon monoxide.

Allergy season extends

Dear EarthTalk: Why is allergy season longer and more intense lately? -- Sneezing in Snohomish



During springtime, many people develop a series of symptoms generalized as seasonal allergies: coughing, sneezing, itchy eyes and congestion, just to name a few. These symptoms are widespread; in 2024, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America reported that some 81 million people in the U.S. suffer from seasonal allergies. This number is growing as symptoms are becoming more intense and allergy season is getting longer.

The cause of these allergies comes down to one product of flowering plants: pollen. This substance becomes more prevalent during the springtime, when the warm weather triggers flowers to open up. When pollen accumulates to high levels in the air, humans can develop an immune system response that leads to a physical reaction. The problem is that the air is



Courtesy photo

ALLERGY SEASON SEEMS to be worse than ever lately, and scientists are blaming -- you guessed it -- global warming.

getting warmer, and plants are producing pollen for a longer duration and in larger amounts than before. "A longer growing season means the plants have more time to produce pollen," says Dr. Rana Misiak, an allergy specialist at Henry Ford Health. "And that results in pollen circulating in the air for a longer period of time." In addition, droughts and dry weather can cause more pollen production, along

with higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Air pollutants such as carbon dioxide damage the surface of the pollen, making it more allergenic.

Pollen production is heightened by climate change. Human activities are causing global temperatures to rise, subsequently worsening allergy season for many. "To me, [worsening allergies] highlight the fact that our health-even if

you just have a pollen allergy-is being impacted by climate change," says Mary Margaret Johnson, MD, PhD, a research scientist of environmental health at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. "And some have much more severe health consequences from climate change." This means that the health of an individual is somewhat out of their hands-it is up to climate change to determine the severity of their allergies.

Taking action to reduce collective carbon emissions and effectively slow the rise of global temperatures will help minimize symptoms felt by allergy season. There are also many studies now being conducted, like the Citizen Science HD's Pollen Nation Project at Emory University or the National Phenology Network, that allow civilian participation. If you are interested, you can learn more about these studies and contribute data towards their findings. In addition, any action to reduce your personal carbon footprint or advocate for pro-climate legislation will help to improve the current conditions of seasonal allergies.

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-Route 66 Days-

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Where: Braceville Fire House,

101 State Rd. 53 on

Old Route 66

Empathetic Respiratory Therapist named Morris Hospital April Fire Starter

Sometimes a career in healthcare begins with a personal experience that leaves a lasting impression.

For Morris Hospital Respiratory Therapist Maegan Pfeifer, that moment came when her father was admitted to Morris Hospital and placed on a ventilator. While he was receiving care, Pfeifer got to know the respiratory therapists who supported him, and their compassion and expertise inspired her to follow a similar path.

That experience sparked a passion that now shapes the care she provides to patients every day. In recognition of her contributions to Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers, Pfeifer has been named April Fire Starter of the Month.

Morris Hospital Director of Critical Care Services Laura Decker describes Pfeifer as a dependable and valued member of the team.

"Maegan is an incredibly dedicated and reliable respiratory therapist," Decker says. "Her ability to stay calm in stressful situations, along with her positive attitude, makes her an important support to others in the department. She is someone her teammates know they can count on, no



MAEGAN PFEIFER

matter the situation."

Respiratory Therapy was not always part of Pfeifer's plan. The Wilmington resident initially earned a degree in Psychology and was exploring job opportunities when her father became ill and she felt called to change career paths.

After going back to school to study respiratory therapy, Pfeifer quickly found purpose in helping patients breathe easier and feel more comfortable during some of their most diffi-

cult moments.

Today, patients continue to benefit from that same level of compassion and commitment that first inspired Pfeifer.

When asked what motivates her, Pfeifer says it is seeing the difference she can make in real time.

"It is incredibly rewarding to watch patients improve and get better," she says. "I like that every day is different and that I have the chance to help people. Growing up in Morris makes this work even more meaningful to me. I love being able to care for people in my own community."

Her impact goes beyond patient care. Pfeifer is known for supporting her coworkers, sharing her knowledge, and helping create a positive environment for both staff and patients. Whether she is mentoring students, assisting a teammate, or stepping in during a busy shift, she consistently brings a sense of calm and teamwork that strengthens the entire department.

In the Fire Starter nomination, a colleague shared how much Pfeifer brings to her role each day.

"Maegan puts her patients at ease with her smile and empathy," the

nomination reads. "She shows up ready to give her best and is always willing to share her knowledge, including with the students she mentors. She lives out the mission of our hospital in everything she does."

In early civilizations, fire starters were individuals who had the important job of keeping the flame alive. With over 1,500 employees, Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers is the largest employer in Grundy County.

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OBITUARIES

Beverly Jean Hooper



SURPRISE, AZ—Beverly Jean Hooper, 88, of Surprise, AZ formerly of Wilmington, and Arlington, VA, passed away peacefully on Dec. 24, 2025, at Rock Creek at the Park Memory Care.

Born on March 5, 1937, in Florence Township, Beverly was the daughter of Chester and Harriet (Reils) Hooper. She was raised and educated in Wilmington and Symerton, IL, graduating from Wilmington High School with the class of 1955, the first class to graduate from the new high school. She continued her education at Joliet Junior College.

Beverly enjoyed a long and fulfilling career marked by dedication and distinguished service. She began her career with the United States Army at the Joliet Arsenal before transferring to the United States Air Force, where she worked in the Pentagon. She retired in 1996 after an accomplished career, serving within the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics. Her role in the Senior Executive Service was of a rank equivalent to that of a three-star general, reflecting her leadership, expertise, and commitment to public service. During her career, she also traveled extensively for work, including trips to Alaska and twice to the Middle East, visiting Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Jordan, and Egypt.

Beyond her professional life, Beverly embraced many interests and hobbies that brought her joy. She was an avid golfer, enjoyed playing cards, and was a devoted Chicago Cubs fan. For over 30 years, she wintered at her condo in Sun City, AZ, where she enjoyed hitting the greens and watching the Cubs spring training. She also had a fondness for games of chance and could often be found enjoying recreational games and a bit of gambling. During her working years, she played softball on her work team, building friendships and lasting memories.

Beverly loved to travel, with a special fondness for Rehoboth Beach, DE, and other East Coast destinations. She cherished her annual week spent at her time-share in Williamsburg, VA, a tradition she looked forward to each year. Known for her warmth and enthusiasm, she was the best tour guide whenever friends and family visited her in Virginia or Arizona. She also had a deep appreciation for music, concerts, and movies.

A woman of generosity and compas-



sion, Beverly volunteered at the Methodist Church in Arlington, VA, where she delivered Meals on Wheels to those in need. She also selflessly served as co-executor for a friend suffering from dementia, demonstrating her loyalty and care for others.

She is survived by her loving family, including her nieces: Lori (Jim) Sternisha, of New Lenox, IL; Joni Hooper, of Elwood; Geri (Rickey) Vaughan, of Elwood; Sherry (Steve) Carlock, of Sparta, TN; and Terri Putnam, of Great Lakes, IL; great-niece, Shauna (Chris) Hidlebaugh; great-nephews: Shane (Lauren) Carlock and Jonathan Putnam; her great-great-niece and nephew, Lily Hidlebaugh and Charlie Carlock as well as her special friends: Vicki (David) Warner, Patricia Donat, and Charles Collier, and several cousins.

Beverly was preceded in death by her parents and her two brothers, Leonard (Marilyn) and Donald (Elsie) Hooper. She also shared a lifelong friendship of over 60 years with Marion Joyce Putzler, who preceded her in death in 2014.

The family extends their heartfelt gratitude to the staff at Rock Creek at the Park Memory Care for the compassionate care they provided, especially in her final weeks. Their kindness and dedication meant so much, and they often expressed what an honor it was to care for her.

She will be deeply missed by her family, friends, and all whose lives she has touched.

In accordance with her wishes, cremation rites have been accorded.

The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Rd., in Wilmington on Friday, May 1, 2026, from 11 a.m. until time of memorial service at 1 p.m. Following the services, she will be laid to rest at Oakwood Cemetery in Wilmington.

The services will be live streamed through a link on Beverly's obituary page. Memorials in Beverly's name may be made to the Air Force Aid Society.

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

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

Geneva Tiller

DIAMOND—Geneva Tiller (née Brock), 79, of Diamond, passed away Thursday, April 23, 2026 at Lightways Hospice in Joliet.

Geneva was born July 5, 1946, to Owen and Jane Brock in Jacksboro, TN. She was united in marriage to Johnny Wilson Tiller, and together they shared many years until his passing on April 17, 2011.

She dedicated many years working as a security guard at Personal Products in Wilmington. A woman of faith, she was a lifelong member of the Braidwood Recreation Club. She found joy in the simple things, especially reading, taking walks, watching Lifetime movies, planting flowers, and country line dancing.

She is survived by her loving son, Johnny (Debra) Tiller, of Braidwood; her cherished grandchildren, Kendall Tiller and Zack Tiller; her sister, Lula (Darel) Forth, of Naperville, IL; her sister-in-law, Elsie Tiller, of Pennsylvania; her nieces,



Tina (Steve) Frazier, of Lockport, IL and Debby (Emanuel) Sparza, of Braidwood; and her lifelong friend, Martha Ginter, of Elwood, IL; along with many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband and her siblings.

In accordance with her wishes, cremation rites have been accorded.

A memorial visitation will be held Thursday, April 30, 2026 at R.W. Patterson Funeral Home and Crematory in Braidwood from 1 until 4 p.m.

To share memories or offer condolences, please visit Geneva's online guest-book at www.rwpattersonfuneralhomes.com or find us on Facebook.

R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory , 401 E. Main St., Braidwood is entrusted with arrangements.

Margaret A. Pierard

DIAMOND—Margaret A. Pierard, "Margie," 82, of Diamond, passed away Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2025 at Morris Hospital.

Born June 12, 1943 in Joliet, Margaret Ann was the daughter of Theodore and Marguerite (Albrecht) Smith. She was raised and educated in Coal City and graduated from Coal City High School with the class of 1961, where she was chosen to be an Illini Girls State Representative and excelled in music which led to her being made Drum Major. She was selected for Illinois All-State Music, playing several instruments and was a particularly talented clarinet player. As a young woman, Margie worked at the Dairy Castle with her best friend, Joyce (Burla) Morris, and later with a Metropolitan Life Insurance Agency in Joliet while she attended Joliet Junior College. On May 11, 1963, she married David Dale Pierard at Assumption Catholic Church in Coal City, and together they made their home and raised their family in Diamond.

Margie worked for her family business, Smith Hardware in Coal City, for many years. She was a familiar face with a warm greeting for anyone who walked through the doors of the store. Margie and her family were members of Assumption Catholic Church, and she was an active member of the Coal City Junior Women's Club for 10 years, serving as past president and past vice-president of the club.

Margie enjoyed handcrafting, particularly sewing, crocheting, and quilting. She was particularly fond of Halloween when she would make costumes for her grandchildren. Margie was an avid reader and a great fan of Jeopardy and the Chicago Bears, and took great pleasure in her hours-long phone conversations shared with her dear friend, Reenie Bosonetta. Most important to her was her family, taking great pride in raising her children and seeing them grow to raise their own families.



Survivors include her children: Marcie (Bill) Miller, of Colorado Springs, CO and Tracey (Sheri) Pierard and Paul Pierard, both of Coal City; six grandchildren: Andrew (Lizzie) Miller, of Golden, CO; Anthony Miller, of Lyons, CO; Matthew (Bianca) Miller, of Colorado Springs, CO; Kyle (Melissa) Pierard, of Coal City; Logan (Tori) Pierard, of Morris and Talya Pierard, of Coal City; six great-grandchildren: Daphne, Lucia, Kathryn Margaret, Tessa, Jace, and Wyatt; sisters-in-law, Cathy Smith, of Coal City and Lorraine Pierard, of Crossville, TN; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Margie was preceded in death by her parents and husband; one grandson, Dylan Pierard; two brothers: Hugh "Choppy" Smith and Ted "Pidge" Smith; two brothers-in-law: Ernest (Esther) Pierard and Edward Pierard; and one sister-in-law: Alice (Tom) Fedash.

Per Margie's wishes, cremation rites were accorded.

The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation on Saturday, May 2, 2026 at Reeves Funeral Home, 75 N. Broadway Street, in Coal City from 10 a.m. until the time of memorial service at 11:45 a.m.

Inurnment will follow at Braceville Gardner Cemetery where Margie will later be laid to rest with her husband.

In lieu of flowers, preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Margie's memory to Candlelight Home Healthcare, 115 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL 60416 or to the Coal City Food Pantry, 6805 McArde Road, Coal City, IL 60416.

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

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

Sandra Kerr

MARYVILLE, TN—Sandra Kerr, 83, of Vonore passed away peacefully on April 9, 2026 at her home. Sandra was born on July 30, 1942 in Joliet, to the late Emery and Glenice Jones. Sandra graduated Wilmington High School with the Class of 1960. She started her work career at the Joliet Arsenal Ammunitions Plant as a Secretary. She then later worked for Embassy Care Center as a Secretary until her retirement.

Sandra loved dancing at record hops in her "younger days" and watching Peyton Place and one of her favorite old movies, Tobacco Road. She was a faithful assistant to her dad treating patients in massage therapy. She loved dogs, horses and a western theme. Her childhood idols were Roy Rogers and Hopalong Cassidy. She was a fan of country music, Dolly, Elvis, Rod Stewart and Alan Jackson. She never missed an episode of Yellowstone and was Rips biggest fan. She loved watching General Hospital and first watched it with her Nana in the 60's. She was a fashionable lady and loved wearing her leopard prints and ankle bracelets and made the best macaroni and cheese for her family. She never refused a Reuben or White Castle. She loved pontoon rides with her family. She was a loving and devoted mom, mother-in-law, grandma, sister-in-law, aunt, dog mom and Sisy. A beloved friend to many throughout the years. Fiercely loyal to her family and friends; always listened and gave comfort when it was need-



ed. There are no words to express how much she will be missed. She was and will always be our hero. "Goodbyes are not forever. Goodbyes are not the end. They simply mean I'll miss you until we meet again".

She is survived by her children: Chuck (Julie) Sprandel, Candy (Dale) McWilliams, Cassandra (Darin) Plotts, Brandie (Tom) Catlin; Grandkids: Savannah (Michael) Basnar, Zachary (Christina) McWilliams, Alexa McWilliams, Nick McWilliams, Brett (Emily) McWilliams, Luke McWilliams, Kyle (Jessica) Plotts, Elizabeth Catlin, Tom (Autumn) Catlin, Danielle Catlin, Cris Catlin; Great Grandchildren: Kennedy Hartley, Bentley Plotts, Audrina Plotts; Sister, Paula (Kevin) Baldwin; Niece, Lindsey (Jason) Dockemeyer; Great Niece and Nephew: Emma Dockemeyer and Easton Dockemeyer; and beloved pet Bobo.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Emery and Glenice Jones; husband of 15 years, William Kerr.

The family will receive friends from 5:00-7:00 pm on Wednesday, April 15, 2026 at McCammon-Ammons-Click Funeral Home in Maryville with the funeral service to immediately follow at 7:00 pm. The interment will be at 11:00 am, Thursday, April 16, 2026, at Carpenters Campground Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Monroe County Animal Shelter.

A big weekend for Route 66 towns

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

With the Route 66 Centennial drawing national and international attention, communities along the Red Carpet Corridor are preparing for one of the busiest tourism weekends in recent memory.

From Joliet to Bloomington-Normal, towns are organizing vendor markets, entertainment, historic displays, and family-friendly activities designed to welcome travelers celebrating the Mother Road's 100th birthday.

The festival began in 2007, and was created to promote tourism and economic development in the roughly 100-mile stretch between Joliet and Bloomington-Normal.

While each town offers its own personality and attractions, the shared goal remains the same — inviting visitors to explore the history, nostalgia, and small-town charm that continue to define Route 66.

Following is a sample of activities in towns in this readership area.

Wilmington: A 'Giant' hub of activity

Wilmington is expected to be one of the busiest stops along the corridor, with activities planned throughout the downtown area and at the Route 66 Gemini Giant site.

Downtown Wilmington will host a flea market featuring approximately 90 vendors, filling two full blocks of the city's business district. Food trucks, shopping opportunities and community entertainment are expected to draw steady crowds throughout the weekend. The Wilmington Chamber is coordi-

nating the flea market and sold out of vendor spaces a week early.

Chamber President Steven Evans said never before has the market sold out early. To open up additional spaces he moved all the food vendors onto the city parking lot in the 220 block of north Water Street.

That's also where the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile will be parked 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

Look for the Chamber tent where the Red Carpet giveaway will be available. The 15 towns—from Joliet to Bloomington—that make up the 100-mile stretch of the Red Carpet will each be handing out its own sticker. Those can be applied to a free water bottle that travelers reserve ahead of time at the Red Carpet website.

Additional activity is centered near the Gemini Giant, where the Wilmington Island Park District operates The Landing souvenir shop.

Saturday activities near the Gemini Giant will include special Route 66-themed root beer and soda floats served in commemorative centennial cups, along with face painting for families arriving in town for the flea market.

Sunday will feature the Rotary Club's Sip and Stroll event, which will include raffles, art displays, live music and beverage tastings. Visitors will also be able to collect commemorative Route 66 stickers at the Landing Pad Sunday.

Braidwood: Americana and kitsch

The fun begins with a visit to the Braidwood Lions Club Information booth to pick up commemorative giveaways, while supplies last. The Braidwood Zoo offers a quirky photo venue, featuring sculptures by the late

Jack Barker.

Browse vendors and enjoy a vintage car show in Polk-A-Dot's lot. While you're there, pose with Elvis, Superman, or other American heroes. Enjoy Americana snacks at the restaurant.

Sunday will feature music by the Silhouettes from noon to 4 p.m. Feel free to enjoy exhibits at the Braidwood Historical Museum at 111 N. Center St.

Citywide vendor markets and yard sales are expected to take place throughout the weekend, with organizers reporting that vendor space has already reached capacity.

Much of the attention in Braidwood centers around its well-known Route 66 attractions such as Polk-A-Dot Drive In, Braidwood Zoo, and Braidwood Historical Museum, where visitors frequently gather to take photos, purchase souvenirs and experience the nostalgic feel of the historic highway.

Elwood: Fun begins early

Elwood is starting the celebrations early. On May 1, Elwood Village Hall will be the site of a car show, music, and much more.

Saturday and Sunday get free stuff (while supplies last), vendors and a farmers market will be hawking their wares, and antique tractors will be on display.

Godley: Mining History

Though smaller than neighboring communities, Godley offers visitors a glimpse into the region's industrial and mining past.

Community yard sales and local vendor stops are expected throughout the village, giving travelers opportunities to browse antiques, collectibles and handmade goods.

On Saturday, Rosie and the Rivets will be feature music from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and by the Jimmy Monsen Band from 3-5 p.m.

Hot dogs, popcorn, and cotton candy will be given away while supplies last.

On Sunday, visit the iconic Stumble Inn at 201 Kankakee St. for giveaways.

Braceville: Grassroots celebrations

Braceville adds a distinctly small-town feel to the Red Carpet Corridor experience.

Community-led events, including yard sales and vendor booths, are expected to line portions of the village, offering visitors a chance to interact directly with residents and local organizations.

The Braceville Fire Dept., 101 State Rd. 53, will be serving hot dogs and hamburgers Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., contributing to the welcoming atmosphere that has become a hallmark of Braceville.

Gardner: Hoosegow mug shots & more

Visit the mayor at Gardner's two-cell jail for this year's giveaway. The Gardner Lions Club will be serving up root beer floats and pork chop sandwiches starting at 10 a.m. both Saturday and Sunday. Enjoy a sidewalk sale on Depot street. For the kiddies, there will be an inflatable bounce house.

Saturday-only events on Depot Street include a car show from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Elvis impersonator from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. On Sunday only, there will be a tractor show from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Down the road

Additional stops can be made in seven more towns south on the Mother Road. Each town will be handing out the collectible while supplies last.

Forest Preserve launches campaign to curb fishing line harm to wildlife

As fishing and boating season begins, the Forest Preserve District of Will County is urging anglers to properly dispose of fishing line that can strangle, maim or kill wildlife.

The District is also encouraging preserve visitors to help clean up discarded line, hooks and other debris that can harm birds and animals.

As part of the effort, the Fishing for Trash program has been expanded from a short-term initiative to a season-long effort.

"Staff, volunteers, visitors all have seen firsthand what discarded fishing line does to wildlife, and it is honestly heart wrenching. Birds tethered to trees, geese with several feet of line trailing behind from their mouths. Animals without any feet. Nests made with more fishing line than natural material. I could go on and on," said Angie Opiola, facility supervisor at Hidden Oaks Nature Center.

Opiola said she hopes the expanded program raises awareness about the dangers of improperly discarded fishing line.

"Whether you are an angler or not, you can do



FISHING LINE, including a bobber, is wrapped around the leg of a Canada goose.

something about the line. If you see it -- grab it! And feel like a hero because you literally are saving an animal's life."

Updated monofilament recycling tubes have been installed at fishing locations in 2025. The redesigned bins are more durable and better equipped to prevent misuse, while making it easier to collect line for proper

recycling.

Collected line is sent to the Berkley Conservation Institute in Iowa, where it is repurposed into products such as fish cribs, spools and tackle boxes. Since 1990, more than 9 million miles of fishing line have been recycled through the program. Improperly discarded line can persist in the environment for up to 600 years.

The Forest Preserve has documented multiple cases of wildlife harmed by discarded line, including birds and waterfowl that became entangled and died or required rescue. A pelican had to be euthanized after becoming tangled in fishing line at McKinley Woods in Channahon. A dead egret was found hanging from a tree at Lake Renwick in Plainfield, and a great blue heron died at Rock Run Rookery in Joliet after being ensnared in fishing line in a tree.

Two emaciated Canada geese were rescued and treated for leg and foot injuries and infections after being found with fishing line wrapped around their legs at Whalon Lake in Naperville. A robin suffocated after becoming entangled in fishing line and hung from a tree at Isle a la Cache in Romeoville.

A social media campaign will further highlight the issue and share tips for safe disposal, including using designated recycling bins or cutting line into small pieces before placing it in the trash if recycling is not available.

Wilmington Garden Club to host perennial exchange

The Wilmington Garden Club is having its yearly perennial exchange on Saturday, May 9 at the VFW.

Bring plants to exchange at 9 a.m., as the Garden Club will be celebrating its 90th birthday.

The Garden Club has been instrumental in creating the gardens at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery for 25 years and is proud of making Wilmington a more

beautiful town.

Garden Club members teamed with VFW Post 5422 to honor military veterans by purchasing and dedicating the only Blue Star marker on historic Route 66.

The Garden Club is a dedicated presence in Wilmington, having sponsored many home and garden walks and the beautiful fountain at Claire's corner.

The club is very proud

of building and dedicating Riley's garden for little Riley Fox, a landmark for our town at the children's memorial garden.

The public is invited to come to the perennial exchange and enjoy the bake sale, raffles, and plant exchange. Enjoy our beautiful and delicious 90th birthday cake at 9 a.m. on Saturday, May 9.

We hope to see you there!

Vendors wanted for craft show

Coal City United Methodist Church, located at 6805 E. McArdle Road in Coal City, will hold an indoor/outdoor Spring Craft & Vendor Fair on Saturday, May 2. Crafters & Vendors are now being accepted. Indoor and outdoor spaces are available. For more information or to sign up, contact Stephanie Sarff at 815-685-1709. The deadline to sign up is April 25.

Gas prices will likely rise again

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have risen 2.7 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$4.29/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Prices in Illinois are 7.3 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 90.3 cents per gallon higher than a year ago.

Locally, pain at the pump continues with Wilmington gas ranging from \$4.04/g at Mohsen to \$4.39/g at Love's.

In Braidwood, it's a united front, with \$4.55/g at all reporting stations.

Coal City gas prices range from \$4.45/g at Shell, up to \$4.65/g at Gas N Wash.

BP in Morris has gas for \$4.05/g, but expect to pay \$4.49/g at Casey's and

other stations.

For the first time in ages, gas is cheaper in Wilmington than in Bourbonnais. Gas ranges from \$4.27/g at Circle K, up to \$4.49/g at Casey's.

"Average gasoline prices rose in 39 states over the last week, with the national average moving higher, while diesel prices declined in most states, offering a brief divergence at the pump," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"However, that divergence may prove short-lived. Oil prices have been climbing again as markets react to renewed geopolitical tensions and the cancellation of talks between the U.S. and Iran. As a result, gasoline prices are set to rise further this week, with diesel expected to follow. Many inland states—including those in the Great Lakes and Plains—

could see average gas prices climb to their highest levels since 2022."

According to CBT News, your corner gas station isn't setting the market, it's attempting mean survival.

Stations make between 15 and 35 cents per gallon before operating costs. Typically, gas stations make their money selling coffee and snacks than by selling fuel.

Inflation rising

The largest monthly jump in gas prices in six decades led to a sharp spike in inflation in March, according to PBS. Consumer prices rose 3.3% in March from a year earlier.

Skyrocketing gas prices leave consumers in a conundrum. Do they spend their money on gas or food? Of course, to afford food consumers are typically

forced to drive, and therefore, forced to go without certain necessities.

Of course, higher diesel prices lead to more expensive food and goods since nearly all groceries are shipped by diesel-fueled semi trucks.

When will gas prices drop? According to analysts, you probably shouldn't hold your breath.

"There's an old expression—gas prices go up like a rocket and come down like a feather," said Tom Kloza, an independent oil analyst and advisor to Gulf Oil.

The national average price of diesel has decreased 9.2 cents compared to a week ago and stands at \$5.408 per gallon.

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PERENNIAL Exchange AND BAKE SALE

SATURDAY, MAY 9

VFW AT 557 W. BALTIMORE ST (RT 53) FROM 9AM TO 2PM

Come Celebrate our 90th Birthday!

BIRTHDAY CAKE - BAKE SALE - BASKET RAFFLES - PERENNIAL EXCHANGE

PERENNIALS WILL ALSO BE FOR SALE IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY TRADES

We invite everyone to help us celebrate the beauty of spring & our 90th birthday! Bring a perennial to exchange or purchase one to add to your garden.

There's still work to do on the Bears bill

"We're almost there" on a Bears stadium bill, Rep. Kam Buckner (D-Chicago) told some sports radio hosts on a Friday morning before the House returned to Springfield for three days of session last week. "We're very close."

Asked if the rumor spread by sports business pundit Marc Ganis earlier that week was true about House Speaker Chris Welch holding up the Bears bill, Buckner, the House's point person on the state megaprojects bill that includes the Arlington Heights Bears stadium complex, flatly denied it.

"I want to be very unequivocal and clear about this: Nothing can be further from the truth," Buckner said on WSCR Radio. Speaker Welch, he said, "has given me the green light as his representative in these conversations to bring this home, and we're doing that."

Rep. Buckner accused Ganis, who is widely quoted in sports media on NFL stadium plans, of "a willful mischaracterization. It's a bad faith interpretation of the facts. It's not analysis. It's fabrication with confidence... It's a convenient fiction dressed up as expertise. It's not helpful, and it's not true."



CAPITOL FACTS
Rich Miller

Ouch. A few days later, Rep. Buckner told the Chicago Sun-Times that he was working on a property tax relief mechanism within the megaprojects bill, but wasn't sure what form it would take.

Gov. JB Pritzker's top staff seemed taken by surprise. An agreement had been made not to alter the deal that had already been cut with the Bears. The object was to figure out a way to attract enough votes to get it to the Senate and reassure the Bears that things were on track.

The next day, I was able to obtain an advance copy of Buckner's bill and posted it on my website, CapitolFax.com. While Buckner had told reporters that he'd been working "lockstep" with the governor's top staff, Pritzker's office released a terse statement saying, "The Governor's Office is currently reviewing the draft amendment provided by Capitol Fax and does not have comment at this time."

The new property tax component would take half of the money that the Bears or other megaproject developers would pay in lieu of property taxes give

some to area local governments for property tax rebates and then give the rest to the state's property tax relief fund.

But that would mean the Bears' payment might have to be doubled, because Arlington Heights-area schools and other local governments would see their negotiated payment cut in half. A top source close to Arlington Heights schools said if the Bears had to pay \$400 million instead of \$200 million, "That's a Bears problem," not theirs.

And, despite some comments made last week, it really wouldn't produce significant statewide property tax relief. Two years ago, Illinoisans paid \$40 billion in property taxes.

A proposed state constitutional amendment to levy a 3% surcharge on annual personal income over a million dollars, would've thrown big bucks at schools and provided a significant amount for property tax relief. But moderate Democrats and some others refused to support it and the proposal went nowhere.

The Senate Democrats were also not made aware of the House's changes in advance, and they weren't happy about it.

And then there was another problem. The House bill would impose a 9% entertainment tax on the area surrounding the future stadium.

Everything from pick-

leball to pinball to zip line courses and music venues would be taxed.

Gov. Pritzker told reporters this past Friday that the amusement tax was something the Bears "were hoping not to see in a bill like this" from the very outset. The Bears would only say that "essential" changes needed to be made to the bill in the Senate.

Whatever the case, Buckner was able to do what he set out to do: Find enough votes to pass a bill through the House.

Buckner's proposal (House Bill 910) received 78 votes, including nine Republicans. Speaker Welch was downright jubilant during a resulting press conference, perhaps relishing his ability to prove doubters and others like Ganis wrong.

"It's a good night for people all over the state of Illinois because House Democrats deliver," Welch said. "House Democrats did the work. They believed in the mantra 'Winners do the work.' And I want to tell you, we did the work."

But there's still a lot of work to do in the Senate. And then it has to come back to the House after changes are made.

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

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Latest scam targeting state employees and retirees

State of Illinois employees and retirees are being warned about attempted investment scams directed at them.

"State employees and retirees in Illinois should be on the lookout for unsolicited emails claiming to provide assistance with retirement planning," Attorney General Kwame Raoul said. "These entities often try to imply they are associated with the State Employees' Retirement System, but they are not. They are likely trying to obtain your personal information or sell you a product. Individuals who receive these emails should not respond or click on any links. Instead, report them to the retirement system."

SERS has received hundreds of inquiries from state employees and retirees who have received one or more messages from so-called investment advisors who imply they are associated with or working with SERS or the state of Illinois.

These so-called investment advisors claim to assist employees and retirees with retirement questions regarding their

Illinois pension, such as when to retire, which retirement options fit their retirement goals and how much longer they must work.

These messages often contain a link to set an appointment to discuss the recipient's retirement options. SERS cautions that it does not contact members by email or in other ways to schedule a financial counseling appointment unless the member has contacted SERS to request one.

"SERS is actively working with authorities to end these unsolicited, misleading emails being sent to state employees," said SERS Executive Secretary Tim Blair. "These so-called advisors offering free pension or retirement reviews are not employees of the state of Illinois and will not be able to answer direct questions about benefits provided by SERS."

Instead, they attempt to sell life insurance or other annuity products for which they may earn a high commission. Do not share personal information or click any links in these emails.

State of Illinois employees and retirees who receive these messages should be aware that these so-called advisors may not have specific expertise with state of Illinois pensions and likely will attempt to sell investment products to individuals who respond.

Do not provide your contact information and do not click on a scheduling link. Instead, forward the message to SERS by emailing reportfraud@srs.illinois.gov.

Bird viewing offered at Lake Renwick

The Will County Forest Preserve District will be offering Lake Renwick Migratory Bird Viewing, 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday, May 16, at the Lake Renwick Heron Rookery Nature Preserve, Plainfield.

View nesting herons, egrets and cormorants and possibly bald eagles from the viewing platform during controlled access hours. All ages; free.

Coming soon... Our Graduation Pages

A Salute to 2026 Seniors
May 6 edition - Coal City High School
May 13 edition - Wilmington High School
May 13 edition - Reed-Custer High



These merchants congratulate the Wilmington High School Class of 2021



Make sure your business is included on our **Class of 2026** pages. Show parents and nearly 400 seniors your business is a supporter. It's a great way to build your brand!

Reserve your space today!
815-476-7966, ask for Patti or Eric



Deadline is May 1.

More than moles

Summer means outdoor activities and a reminder to watch for suspicious moles, a possible sign of skin cancer. But doctors say skin lesions come in many forms, and you should know when to get an expert opinion.

What is and isn't a skin lesion? Raman Kumar, MD, a colorectal and general surgeon at OSF HealthCare, as your checklist:

Yes: moles, blisters, bumps, acne, boils, peeling skin from a sunburn, rashes, poison ivy or similar skin reactions, warts, skin tags and bug bites

Yes, but: Dr. Kumar says freckles and birthmarks are lesions, but they are not harmful.

In other words: "A skin lesion is any type of abnormal growth. It can happen anywhere on the body. If it doesn't look like normal skin, it's considered a growth," Dr. Kumar says.

Causes for each of these lesions vary. We know acne is due to bacteria, and warts are from a virus, for example. Medications, lifestyle choices (like eating certain food that doesn't agree with you) and medical conditions (such as diabetes and liver failure) are other culprits. But when the cause is unexplained, health care providers might need to investigate.

"We look at the lesion. The majority of the time, we can tell if something is benign or malignant. If we have questions, we err on the side of caution and do a

biopsy," Dr. Kumar explains. That involves cutting out part of the lesion and sending it off to a lab for analysis. "Biopsies can be done in the office. If it's a bigger procedure, we have to go to the operating room."

If the biopsy confirms evidence of a problem, such as cancer, the doctor will remove the rest of the bad tissue. Or, Dr. Kumar says some people come to him with a cosmetic or practical reason. They have a large birthmark or cyst on their face, are self-conscious about their appearance and would like it removed, for example. Or, they wear a hard hat for work, and the hat rubs against a lesion on their forehead, causing discomfort.

Dr. Kumar outlines how he would remove a lesion: "Let's say it's on your arm. We clean up the arm. We inject some lidocaine, which is a numbing agent. Then with a knife or other instrument, I'm able to cut it all out. Depending on how deep it is and the size of the lesion, we can glue it back together or put stitches in." Regardless of the method, Dr. Kumar says most of these procedures are routine for providers with minimal aftereffects for the patient. In complex cases, like if the lesion goes down into a muscle, a plastic surgeon might be consulted.

We can't control if we have things like freckles or

moles. But there are plenty of things you can do to help prevent problematic lesions. Limit your exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun or by tanning. In fact, Dr. Kumar would not recommend tanning at all. For outdoor activities, use waterproof sunscreen of 50 sun protection factor (SPF) or higher, and reapply every few hours. Wear long sleeves and a wide brimmed hat.

Wear bug spray when doing outdoor activities, such as hiking, where insects are present.

Wash your body regularly.

"Don't overclean," Dr. Kumar warns. "If you scratch your skin, that allows bacteria and other things to get into your skin and cause infections."

Don't smoke. Dr. Kumar says smoking changes your skin for the worse, such as developing wrinkles and lesions.

Find the right skincare products. If you use a lotion and it causes a rash, for example, don't use that product again. Dr. Kumar adds that Vaseline and petroleum jellies are good for moisturizing your skin. But they're thick and can clog pores.

"Keep it simple. The \$100 face cream is going to work the same as the \$10 one," Dr. Kumar says.

Know the ABCDEs of suspicious moles.

- A is for asymmetry. One half of the spot is not like the other half.

- B is for border. The mole has an irregular, scalloped or poorly defined border.

- C is for color. The spot has varying colors, like tan, brown, black, white, red or blue.

- D is for diameter. Dermatologists say melanoma skin cancers are usually greater than six millimeters, or about the width of a pencil eraser. But they can be smaller, so don't consider diameter alone.

- E is for evolving. The mole looks different from the rest or is changing in size, shape or color. Dr. Kumar says you can take pictures to show your provider how the mole has changed.

If your lesion has any of the ABCDE red flags or you just have a concern, see a provider.

Methodist church to hold senior gathering

Coal City United Methodist Church, located at 6805 E. McArdle Road in Coal City, will hold their May senior citizens gathering on Wednesday, May 6, from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. All are invited to join them for devotions at 11 a.m., followed by lunch at 11:30 a.m.

Activities will begin at 12:30 p.m. This is a free event for seniors. If you are interested in attending, please RSVP by noon on May 5 by calling the church office at 815-634-8670. In-town rides will be provided if needed, just let them know when you RSVP. All senior citizens are welcome.

SUNDAY FUNDAY!

DOORS OPEN AT NOON! FIRST RAFFLE AT 2PM!
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QUEEN of HEARTS

Every TUESDAY at 553 W. Kennedy Rd. Braidwood
You must play BINGO to participate.
Doors open at 4pm. Drawing is held at intermission.
Queen of Hearts Pot is \$6,165.00
For BINGO players only on Tuesday nites and see the QUEEN rules at the BINGO hall for rules and regulations.



Braidwood Post 039 BINGO

Tuesday Night Flash Max Bingo

Pull Tabs	6:30pm	Hot Food, Snacks & Beverages
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Doors Open	4:00pm	Braidwood, IL 60408

Home of the "Big Guy"
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815-216-2570



Forest Preserve to host where the wildflowers are

The Forest Preserve District of Will County is hosting "Where the Wildflowers Are" at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center on Saturday, May 16, from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Discover spring wildflowers on a guided hike while learning about their history and significance. The hike will be up to 1.5 miles on a paved trail. Ages 10 or older; free. Register by Thursday, May 14.

Sheriff's sale of 25050 South Timber Dr.

PUBLIC NOTICE

PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

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

Lakeview Loan Servicing, LLC
Plaintiff,
vs.
Unknown Heirs and Legatees of Christine Kolenda; et. al.
Defendant. No. 25 FC 0042

NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE

Public notice is hereby given that pursuant to a judgment entered in the above cause on the 5th day of November, 2025, MIKE KELLEY, Sheriff of Will County, Illinois, will on Thursday, the 7th day of May, 2026, commencing at 12:00 o'clock noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, sell at public auction to the highest and best bidder or bidders the following-described real estate:

LOT 5 IN TIMBER CREEK, BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PART OF THE NORTHEAST 1/4 OF SECTION 16, IN TOWNSHIP 34 NORTH, AND IN RANGE 10 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED NOVEMBER 22, 1978, AS DOCUMENT NO. R78-46651, AND CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION RECORDED MAY 21, 1980 AS DOCUMENT NO. R80-13418, IN WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

Commonly known as: 25050 South Timber Drive, Elwood, IL 60421
Description of Improvements: Residential
P.I.N.: 10-11-16-202-008-0000

Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County.

In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act.

Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State.

FOR INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:
Codilis & Associates, P.C.
15W030 N. Frontage Road Suite 100
Burr Ridge, Illinois 60527
P: 630-794-5300
F: 630-794-9090
Plaintiff's Attorney

MIKE KELLEY
Sheriff of Will County

Published in The Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, April 15, 22 and 29, 2026.

Thank You!

On April 12th Our Caring Closet hosted its second annual "Our Couture Closet". Many attended the live auction/fashion show, the Ghostbusters and even Bigfoot joined the festivities this year! We at the Caring Closet would like to thank all our our guests, models, and volunteers for helping make it a great day. Also we would like to express our gratitude to Chic Geek & Antique, Lionsmark Auction Company, World Kia, Oak Knoll Financial, McGann & Associates, Wilmington Collision, Eaton & Schultz Insurance Group, FCC First Christian Church, QRock, Dave Ziebell, Wilmington High School, The Free Press Advocate and all of our Donors for making this event possible.



RED CARPET CORRIDOR FESTIVAL

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May 2

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3 wks.- \$25; 4 wks.-\$29*
\$1.00 Extra per line for bold or caps on classified
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The Braidwood Journal — The Coal City Courant — The Free Press Advocate

GARAGE SALE
Goose Lake - 6095 E North Prairie Drive. Thurs., April 30 & Fri., May 1, 8AM-4PM. Sat., May 2, 8AM-2PM. Teen clothes, men size med-large, juniors and women's size XS-Med. Many name brands Lululemon, Athleta, Nike, etc. Boys clothes 3T-4 and 6-8, girls size 3-6. New portable air conditioner, Pocket Rocket, desk, hunting clothes and boots. Pottery Barn bedding. 90 Polaris Predator go wheeler. cc17

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Experienced hair stylist or barber wanted. Paid commission or rent chair. Located at Bodacious Curls in Coal City. 815-634-4997. ck15-18

LOST & FOUND
Have you found a lost pet or lost a pet in Will County? Please call Will County Animal Control. We may have your pet. We want to reunite your family, 815-462-5633.

REAL ESTATE
rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact:
Codilis & Associates, P.C.
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P: 630-794-5300 F: 630-794-9090
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REAL ESTATE
SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE OF 725 E Rose Lane, Godley, IL 60407 (Single Family Home). On the 21st day of May, 2026 to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **Lakeview Loan Servicing, LLC** Plaintiff V. **Michael J. Toothman; et. al.** Defendant. Case No. 25 FC 0808 in the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois. Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose

REAL ESTATE
SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE OF 25050 South Timber Drive, Elwood, IL 60421 (Residential). On the 7th day of May, 2026 to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **Lakeview Loan Servicing, LLC** Plaintiff V. **Unknown Heirs and Legatees of Christine Kolenda; et. al.** Defendant. Case No. 25 FC 0042 in the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois. Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact:
Codilis & Associates, P.C.
15W030 N. Frontage Road Suite 100 Burr Ridge, Illinois 60527
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Reduce food waste

Food waste hits home financially: The average U.S. family of four tosses out \$2,913 worth of food (or \$728 per person) each year.
This accounts for about 11% of total annual household food budgets and is almost double the cost of household food waste (previously \$1,500) initially introduced by the USDA in 2010.

HELP FOR VETERANS



BE THE ONE is the suicide prevention part of the American Legion. Vets can call: 779-206-8391, The Wilmington Help Line to talk with a Veteran who has had PTSD. There is help, only a phone call away.
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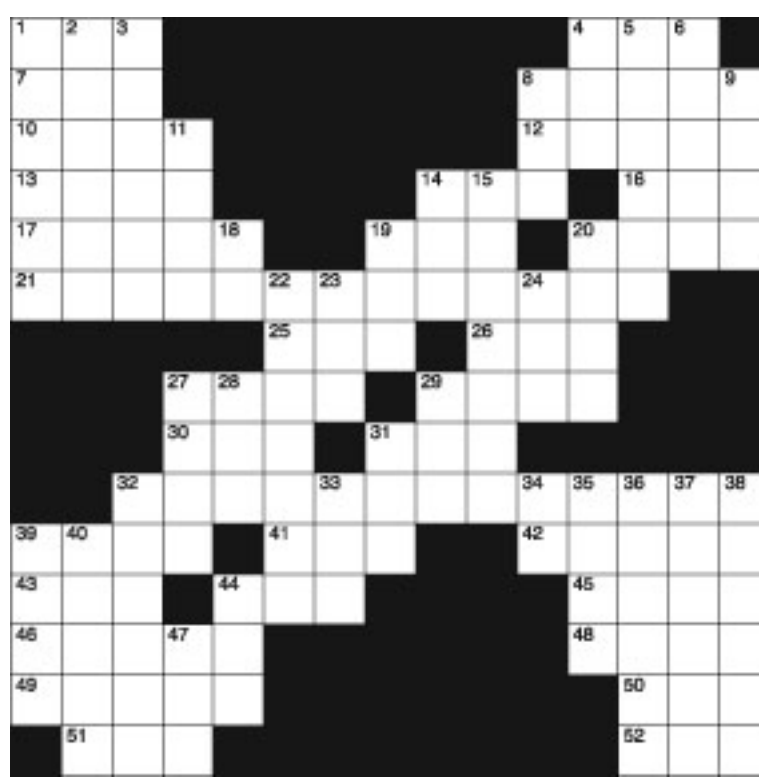
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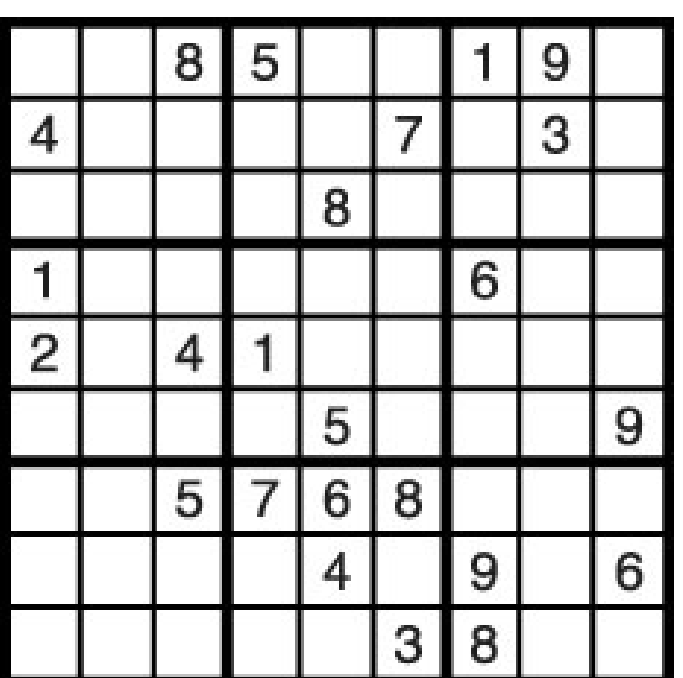
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10. Fancy automobile
12. Small loop or series of loops
13. Exploiter
14. Don't know when yet
16. Group of languages
17. One who's finished
19. After B
20. Angled
21. A place to adopt pets
25. Swiss river
26. Young boy
27. Unexciting
29. American comedian Vidale
30. Peyton's little brother
31. Corporate higher-up

CLUES DOWN
1. Type of whale
2. In tune
3. A citizen of Yemen
4. Actress Ling
5. One who supports
6. Circus performer
8. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
9. Quantitative fact
11. Utah city
14. Where a golfer begins
15. Attendant
18. The ancient Egyptian sun god
19. Book of Chronicles (abbr.)
20. Benedictine monk
22. Not turbulent
23. Car mechanics group
24. Buffer used in chemistry
27. Fall heavily
28. Pie ____ mode
29. The Brits love it
31. Children's TV channel (abbr.)
32. Jacksonville footballer
33. Helps little firms
34. ____ and behold
35. A way to resemble
36. Fingers
37. Excessive indulgences
39. You might be an "empty" one
39. "How the West Was Won" writer
40. European river
44. They begin the alphabet
47. The body's messenger





WILDCAT SPORTS



Photo by Elaine Fisher-Ohlund

DIVING CATCH! Wilmington's Taylor Stefancic makes a diving catch during last week's game against Manteno. The Lady Cats won 7-5.

Lady Wildcats have grip on ICE lead

A dominant week on the diamond kept Wilmington firmly atop the Illinois Central Eight Conference standings, even

as the Lady Wildcats saw their 15-game winning streak come to an end. Wilmington finished the stretch winning four of

five games, improving its conference mark to a perfect 8-0 — still ahead of second-place Manteno (6-2).

The lone setback came against state powerhouse Beecher, as the Lady Wildcats were held scoreless in a 4-0 loss. Despite the result, Wilmington showed little lingering effect, quickly returning to form.

Earlier in the week, the Wildcats opened conference play with a dramatic 7-5 win over Manteno before edging the Panthers again Tuesday in a 3-2 walk-off thriller.

In the rematch, Wilmington delivered in clutch fashion. Tied 2-2 in the bottom of the seventh inning, Emilie Strong provided the decisive moment, driving in the winning run to cap the comeback victory. Both teams received solid pitching performances, with Wilmington's staff matching Manteno strikeout-for-strikeout in a tightly contested game.

Wilmington continued to build momentum Wednesday, erupting for a 16-1 rout of Lisle behind an explosive offensive showing. The Wildcats pounded out 16 runs on nine hits, highlighted by Molly Southall's power at the plate. Southall homered

twice and drove in six runs, while Nina Egizio, Ally Allgood and Meredith Marquardt all contributed multiple RBIs in the lop-sided win.

The offensive surge carried into Friday's matchup against Clifton Central, where Wilmington rolled to another 16-1 victory.

Southall once again led the charge, driving in four runs on three hits, including a two-run home run in the second inning. The Wildcats wasted no time jumping ahead, scoring in every inning while piling up 18 hits.

Egizio and Madisyn Rossow sparked the early rally in the first inning, and Wilmington never looked back, adding seven runs in the fourth to put the game out of reach.

Despite the streak-ending loss to Beecher, the Lady Wildcats remain in control of the ICE race with three conference opponents left.

On Monday/Tuesday they were slated to play Reed-Custer. They will host Minooka in a nonconference game Friday and then host Peotone on Monday. They can lock up the conference title May 11 and 12 by defeating Streator.



Photo by Elaine Fisher-Ohlund

WILMINGTON'S TAYLOR TENN throws a ball into the infield during last week's game against Manteno. The Lady Cats host Morris on Friday.

Young Cats continue to grow

WMS hosted Peotone and Saratoga Middle Schools on April 22 for their home opener, setting two new school records and 43 personal records.

7th grade boys

110m hurdles Bentley Key ran a time of PR 18.78 (1st) and Ian Issert ran a PR 23.21 (4th).

100M—Key led 14.08 PR (3rd), Ryder Meskill 15.25 (4th), Brady Van Duyne 16.83 (7th).

200M—Key ran PR 28.85 (1st), Nick Wells 34.20 (5th), Johnny Long 34.76 (6th), Damon Peters 35.12 (7th), Brady Van Duyne 35.48 (8th) and Ian Issert PR 38.58 (9th).

400M—Ryder Meskill ran a PR 1:09.83 (2nd) and Gabe Holm ran a 1:18.90 (4th).

800m—Ian Browning PR 3:14.87 (4th), Indy DeMaso PR 3:15.08 (5th), Sawyer Cravens 3:27.38 (7th) and Noah Beck 3:28.12 (8th).

1600M Declan Crutchfield 6:51.08 (1st), Browning ran a 7:11.62 (3rd) and Beck PR 8:02.96 (4th).

4X1 team of Key, Issert, Van Duyne and Wells ran PR 1:03.15 (3rd).

The 4x2 relay team of Damon Peters, Johnny Long, Aiden Dumycz and Meskill ran a PR 2:19.26 (2nd).

4x4 team of Wells, Dumycz, Damon Peters and Gabe Holm ran a PR 5:53.63 (2nd).

1600 Medley relay team of Holm, Wells, Meskill and Cravens ran a PR 5:40.93 (1st).

Shot Put throwers Johnny Long threw a PR

8.31M (1st) Jaxson Mack PR 8.10M (3rd), Cravens PR 7.50M (4th) and Brextin Hicks PR 5.39M (6th).

Discus throwers Holm 20.77 (1st), Mack PR 19.44M, Cravens PR 18.81M (5th) and Hicks PR 12.96 (6th).

High Jumper Long jumped 1.34M (2nd).

Long Jumper Brady Van Duyne 3.26M (4th).

Team Score Saratoga 65, Wilmington 55 and Peotone 16.

8th grade boys:

100M Chase Brueggert ran a PR 12.82 (2nd), Gage Sorensen PR 14.16 (3rd), Aiden Browning 14.68 (4th), Jackson Van Duyne PR 15.35 (5th) and D.J. Mathena 18.88.

200M Chase Brueggert ran 27.48 (1st) and Gage Sorensen PR 30.99 (5th) and Jackson Van Duyne PR 33.29 (6th).

400M Chase Brueggert ran a 58.62 (1st).

800M Aiden Browning 2:59.66 (2nd).

Field Events had Shot Put throwers Jackson Sweeney PR 11.37 (1st), Braxton Moore 9.26M (3rd), Logan Iwen PR 8.42M (4th) and Marcus Sogale throw PR 8.22M (5th) and Jay Strong PR 6.46M (7th).

Discus Throwers were Logan Iwen PR 24.29 (1st), Braxton Moore 21.93 (2nd), Aiden Browning 21.79 (3rd), Markus Sogale with a throw of 21.02M (4th), Jackson Sweeney 19.77 (6th) and Jay Strong 13.77M (7th).

High Jumper Aiden Browning jumped 1.28M (2nd).

Long Jumper Jackson Van Duyne with a jump of

3.93M (4th).

Team Scores Saratoga 42.5, Wilmington 41.5 Peotone 17.

7th grade girls:

100m hurdles Maeve Bryant ran a time of 16.51(1st) and Brooke Dickover ran 20.70 (2nd).

100m Maeve Bryant a PR 13.53 (1st), Aryanna Princko 15.50 (3rd), Brooke Dickover 15.64 (4th), Aleah Sanchez PR 16.05 (5th), Madison Smith 16.79 (8th) and Aislynn Carrico PR 18.23 (10th).

200M Maeve Bryant ran a PR and School Record 27.76 (1st) Aleah Sanchez PR 34.35 (4th), Aryanna Princko 34.39 (5th), Chloe Kohl PR 36.21 (7th).

400M Madison Smith 1:22.34 (3rd) Charlotte Crutchfield PR 1:26.89 (4th).

800M Charlotte Crutchfield ran a 3:18.76 (1st) Makenzie Huffer ran PR 3:31.48 (2nd), Emma Workman 3:35.39 (5th), Charlotte Paulsen ran a 4:25.25 (6th) and Fiona Medlin ran 4:25.32 (7th).

1600m Charlotte Crutchfield ran a 7:20.38 (1st), Makenzie Huffer PR 7:29.75 (2nd), Fiona 8:23.61 (3rd) and Charlotte Paulsen PR 8:51.44 (4th).

The 4x4 team of Madison Smith, Aleah Sanchez, Aria Jandeska and Aryanna Princko ran a 5:45.15 (1st).

The 1600 Medley relay team of Chloe Kohl, Madison Smith, Emma Workman, Charlotte Crutchfield ran 5:50.13 (1st).

In the field events Jayden Vance threw the shot 5.82M (3rd), Vivienne

Ceci 5.48M (4th) and Kylie Burgess 5.27M for (5th).

In Disc Jayden threw a distance of 18.04 (1st), Vivienne Ceci 14.23 (3rd) and Kylie Burgess 13.92 (4th).

In High Jump Chloe Kohl jumped a 0.94M (1st).

Team Score: Wilmington 70 Saratoga 48 Peotone 0.

8th grade girls:

100M hurdler Skylar Boersma ran a time of 18.34 (2nd).

100m Raelynn Grygiel 14.04 (1st), Skylar Boersma 14.83 (4th) and Kenzie Lupinski ran a 16.33 (6th).

200m Skylar Boersma ran a 31.19 (3rd) and Riley Shepherd ran a 38.70 (5th).

400M Holly Holm 1:12.35 (1st) and Kenzie Lupinski 1:18.75 (2nd).

4x1 team of Skylar Boersma, Holly Holm, Raelynn Grygiel and Maeve Bryant ran a PR and School Record 54.34 (1st).

1600 Medley relay team of Raelynn Grygiel, Kenzie Lupinski, Aria Jandeska and Holly Holm ran a PR 5:19.43 (1st).

In the field Shot putter Lilly Bailey threw a distance of PR 8.09M (2nd).

Discus thrower Lilly Bailey threw a distance of 30.72 (1st).

In High Jump Holly Holm jumped a 1.21M (4th).

In Long jump Raelynn Grygiel jumped 4.11M (2nd) and Kenzie Lupinski jumped PR 3.81 (5th).

Team Scores: Saratoga 44 Wilmington 41 Peotone 34.

The WMS cats will travel to the Coal City invite on Saturday May 2.



Photo by Elaine Fisher-Ohlund

WILMINGTON'S TARYN GILBERT throws the ball to first for an out against Manteno.



Photo by Elaine Ohlund

BLOCKING A LOW pitch to keep it in play is Wilmington catcher Emilie Strong.

Three pitchers combine for shutout for 8U softball team

The Wilmington Wildcats 8U (@Properties) opened their Tri-County League season with a 7-0 win over Coal City's BDR Properties.

Wildcats pitchers Malena Longest, Annabelle Shell and Emilia Vercelli combined for a shutout in the season opener.

Malena got the start in the circle, with Skylar Dinkins behind the plate. She allowed two hits and no runs over one inning while striking out three. Coal City's starter surrendered four hits and no runs in her inning of work, striking out one.

Annabelle and Emilia each added a scoreless inning in relief to secure the shutout.

Wilmington broke through in the third inning when Malena singled to drive in the game's first run.

Caroline Langusch starred at shortstop, making multiple defensive plays and coming up with a big pop-fly catch to keep

Coal City off the scoreboard.

The Wildcats pulled away in the fifth, scoring five runs. Caroline singled to bring in the first run of the inning. Shell followed with an inside-the-park home run, driving in three. Charlie Olson added an RBI single-her second RBI of the game-to extend the lead.

Wilmington totaled 18 hits on the day. Additional contributions at the plate came from Skyler (2 hits), Payton Stickel (2), Malia Kaitschuck (1), Tessa Johnson (1), and Tanya Polcyn (1).

Defensively, Charlie Boyle and Jaelynn Bergman played key roles in preserving the shutout.

The Wildcats return home to Lodi Vercelli Field to host Herscher on Wednesday (4/29) and Dwight on Friday (5/1), with both games scheduled for 5:30 p.m.. Wilmington will then travel to face Coal City on Saturday at 12:30 PM.

WILDCAT SPORTS

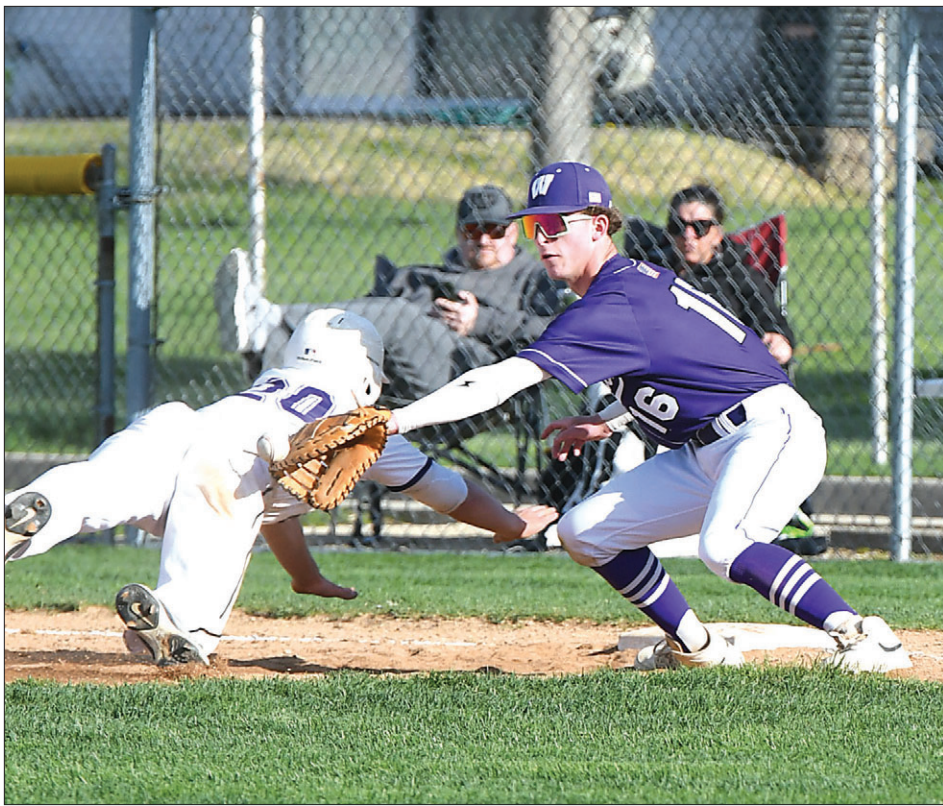


Photo by Elaine Fisher-Ohlund

WILMINGTON'S BOBBY PHILLIPS makes the catch at first for an out against Manteno.

Wildcats sweep week for firm hold for second

The Wilmington baseball team continued its strong stretch last week, powering its way to three more victories to extend its winning streak to five games.

With the sweep, the Wildcats improved to 11-4-1 overall and 6-2 in the Illinois Central Eight Conference, solidifying second place in the standings after taking both games from third-place Manteno.

Wilmington opened the week with a 6-3 win over Manteno, using a balanced offensive attack and steady pitching to set the tone. Ryan Kettman led the way with three hits and an RBI, while Zach Ohlund added two hits and drove in a pair. Declan Moran and Bobby Phillips also contributed run-scoring hits as

the Wildcats built an early lead and held off the Panthers down the stretch.

The Wildcats completed the conference sweep Tuesday with a 5-3 victory, again relying on timely hitting and strong work on the mound. Cooper Holman earned the win, striking out 11 over 6 2/3 innings while allowing just three runs. Holman also delivered at the plate, blasting a home run as part of Wilmington's power surge. Nash Rink added two RBI, while Ryan Kettman and Brysen Meents chipped in key hits to keep the offense moving.

Wilmington capped the week in dominant fashion Thursday, rolling past Sandwich 12-2 behind a barrage of extra-base hits. Declan Moran powered the offense with two home runs and four RBI, while

Zach Ohlund added a pair of hits including a home run and an RBI. Bobby Phillips drove in two runs and Caius Drown collected three hits as the Wildcats racked up 13 hits in the lopsided win.

Tyler Krand picked up the win on the mound, with Dane VanDuyne providing effective relief to close out the game.

The sweep of Manteno proved especially significant, giving the Wildcats a firm grip on second place in the conference standings behind Coal City.

The Cats were to play Reed-Custer Monday and Tuesday but weather may have been a factor. They host Minooka Friday and start a two-game battle with Peotone when they host the Blue Devils Monday.



Photo by Elaine Fisher-Ohlund

WILDCAT DECLAN MORAN catches a fly ball during last week's game against Manteno. Cats won 6-3.

Lady Wildcats bounce back in busy week

After a tough conference setback, the Wilmington girls soccer team responded with a victory on Friday to finish a busy week.

The Lady Wildcats opened the stretch with a challenging Illinois Central Eight Conference loss to Manteno, falling 9-1.

Audrey Powlick accounted for Wilmington's lone goal, while Addison Van Duyne added an assist. Manteno used a balanced offensive attack to pull away early and secure the win.

Wilmington quickly regrouped and turned things around Wednesday with a dominant 7-0 non-conference victory at

DePue.

The Wildcats controlled play from the opening whistle, building a 4-0 halftime lead before adding three more goals after the break.

Van Duyne led the offensive with three goals and an assist, while Powlick added two goals and an assist. Kailyn Motykowski and Mayah Sanchez each found the back of the net as Wilmington's attack generated 10 shots and consistently pressured the DePue defense.

The momentum didn't carry into Thursday, where Wilmington fell 6-1 to Reed-Custer in conference play. The Wildcats showed flashes offensively, but

were unable to contain Reed-Custer's high-powered attack which included five goals scored by their senior Gwen Stewart.

Wilmington closed the week on a high note Friday, defeating Morris 3-1 at home.

After a scoreless first half, the Wildcats erupted for three second-half goals to pull away. The defense tightened as well, limiting Morris to just one goal in the final minutes.

With the busy week behind them, Wilmington now sits at 3-8 overall and 0-5 in conference play. The Lady Wildcats return home to host Peotone on Thursday and Richton Park on Friday.



Photo by Eric Fisher

WILMINGTON'S MAYAH SANCHEZ gains control of the ball during Thursday's game against Reed-Custer. The Cats lost 6-1.



Photo by Eric Fisher

WILMINGTON'S ADDISON VAN DUYN dribbles the ball down the field with Reed-Custer opponent upon her heels.

Wildcat relay breaks it record again

The Wilmington Wildcat track and field team split April 21 with some traveling to the Dwight Invitational while others participated in the ICE frosh-soph conference meet in Manteno.

The boys finished 4th and the girls finished in 5th place in the 13-team event at Dwight. There were many outstanding performances on the night.

At Dwight, the boys 4X100 meter relay of Fynn Bryant, Nate Cupples, Hunter Jimmy Lewsader, and Billy Moore lowered their school record with a time of 44.13.

Jimmy Lewsader followed up that effort with a fantastic personal record in the 400 meter dash in 52.50. Of the 12 personal records (PR's) set on the night, the distance runners of Aiden Poulos, Julian Lowery, Liam Anderson, and Lailah Beck had 7 of them.

McKenna Van Tilburg continued her winning ways with 4 victories in her events. At Manteno, Evan Cravens had the

best performance of the night with his personal record throw of 83'00 in the discus.

Girls performances at Dwight

Taylor Stickel (JR) - 800 m - 2:52.62 (PR) - 7th - 400 m - 1:17.15 - 11th

Miley Swearngen (JR) - 1600 m - 7:41.32 - 11th

Sophia Albright (SO) - shot - 26'03.75 - 10th - 3rd, discus - 75'09 - 9th

Lailah Beck (SO) - 1600 m - 6:30.77 - 8th, 3200 m - 15:13.56 (PR) - 8th

McKenna Van Tilburg (SO) - 100 m - 12.71 - 1ST, 100 m high hurdles - 15.61 - 1ST, 200 m - 26.39 - 1ST, 300 m hurdles - 45.45 - 1ST

Lilly Govero (FR) - 100 m - 15.34 - 15th, 200 m - 31.66 - 12th

Roslyn Wengelewski (FR) - shot - 23'06.25 - 14th, discus - 69'04 (PR) - 12th

Boys performances at Dwight

Nate Cupples (SR) - 200 m - 25.24 - 9th

Terrell Garner (SR) - long jump - 13'09 - 20th

Billy Moore (SR) - 100 m - 11.45 - 2nd

Aiden Poulos (SR) - 3200 m - 12:17.85 (PR) - 5th

Fynn Bryant (JR) - 100 m - 11.88 - 7th

Jimmy Lewsader (JR) - 400 m - 52.50 (PR) - 2nd

Cam Allen (JR) - shot - 41'07 - 6th, discus - 101'11 - 12th

Liam Anderson (SO) - 1600 m - 5:31.94 (PR) - 13th, 3200 m - 12:49.12 (PR) - 10th

Cole Boersma (SO) - 200 m - 24.82 - 7th, 400 m - 54.11 - 4th

Jason Guzier (SO) - discus - 75'08 - 22nd

Hunter Kaitschuck (SO) - 110 m high hurdles - 15.45 - 1ST, 300 m hurdles - 42.40 (PR) - 2nd

Noah Morris (SO) - shot - 31'07 - 17th

Zander Van Duyne (SO) - 110 m high hurdles - 19.45 - 8th, 300 m hurdles - 46.54 - 8th

Stephen Kinnett (FR) - shot - 30'05 - 18th

Julian Lowery (FR) - 800 m - 2:27.94 (PR) - 16th, 1600 m - 5:43.43 (PR) - 15th

4X100 meter relay - 44.13 (PR) - 3rd

Bryant, Nate Cupples, Lewsader, Moore 4X200 meter relay - 1:56.29 - 9th

Ed Kurze, J. Guzier, Garner, Dom Guzier

Boys performances at Manteno:

Steven Ortiz (SO) - 100 m - 16.83 - 16th, long jump - 13'09 - 12th

Evan Cravens (SO) - shot - 28'03 - 6th, discus - 83'00 (PR) - 2nd

Logan Hill (SO) - 100 m - 13.63 - 14th

Jax Friddle (FR) - 100 m - 14.15

Colby Wengelewski (FR) - shot - 27'01 - 8th, discus - 61'06 - 10th

The frosh-soph team travelled to Seneca for the Seneca F/S Invitational on Monday, April 27. The varsity hosted to Herscher, Peotone, and Manteno on Tuesday, April 28 for Senior Night.