

WILMINGTON, IL | WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 2026 | A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER (815) 476-7966



Photo by Eric Fisher

FREEDOM ROCKS was a real bang on Friday when the city and park district hosted live entertainment, children's games and food vendors on the North Island Park. The highlight was a 25-minute pyrotechnics display shot over the towering oak trees.

New launch site makes Freedom Rocks fireworks bigger, brighter

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

The City of Wilmington's annual Freedom Rocks celebration lit up the night sky Friday with a spectacular fireworks display that featured a new launch location and a new vendor, creating what city officials described as one of the

best shows in the event's history.

For the first time in more than a decade, fireworks were launched from the northern tip of North Island Park rather than from private property on the west shore of the Kankakee River opposite the park.

The change allowed for higher, louder and

brighter pyrotechnics that drew cheers from spectators gathered throughout the park and downtown.

"I thought the new company we hired, RKM Fireworks, did a fantastic job," Mayor Ben Dietz said. "In fact, it was probably the best 25-minute fireworks show Wilmington has ever had."

The city began looking

for a new fireworks provider following the Catfish Days display in July 2025. RKM Fireworks, based in Edwardsburg, Michigan, emerged as a leading candidate after providing a demonstration show for city officials in May.

"We liked their proposal, which included shooting them right from

the island, because it reduces the city's liability while allowing for a better fireworks show," Dietz said.

Representatives from RKM initially evaluated the traditional launch site across the river but expressed concerns about the proximity of nearby homes. Instead, they proposed using North Island

Park itself as the launch point.

The biggest challenge was finding a suitable firing location among the park's mature oak trees.

"They found a clear



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Juicy Watermelons

Recent water death serves as a stark reminder of the hazards of water

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

On a warm summer day, the Kankakee River may appear calm, inviting and harmless. What better way to cool off than a quick dip?

But beneath the surface, rivers swollen by weeks of rain become a death trap.

The recent death of 54-year-old Angelo J. Triolo of Monee following an apparent watercraft incident on the Kankakee River near Wilmington is the latest reminder that Illinois waterways can turn tragic in a matter of seconds.

According to the Office of Will County Coroner Laurie H. Summers, Triolo was pronounced dead June 20 at the Des Plaines Conservation Area boat launch. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources Conservation Police continue to investigate the incident, and a final cause and manner of death remain pending.

Triolo's death comes amid a troubling series of water-related fatalities and rescues across Illinois and the Great Lakes region in June.

According to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR):

"The Kankakee River is generally not recommended for swimming due to its unpredictable nature, hidden hazards, and fast currents, local authorities advise against it."

Record drownings

In May, two jet ski riders survived after going over a dam on the Kankakee River in Kankakee. According to fire officials, the pair were unfamiliar with the river and drifted too close to the structure before being swept over. Both survived because they were wearing life jackets.

Since 1980, more than 20 people have died at the Wilmington dam. While deaths at the Wilmington



A DAM REMINDER—Flowers have been placed at the Kankakee River dam in Wilmington in memory of Angelo Triolo of Monee who drowned June 20. His personal watercraft was found below the dam but an investigation continues by IDNR Conservation Police.

dam have all but ceased since fencing was installed, the Kankakee River continues to claim lives.

What you can't see may kill you

Dams aren't the only hazard awaiting the unwary. Water rescue personnel say the greatest danger is often what people cannot see.

Heavy rains that have repeatedly soaked Will County have transformed many rivers from recreational waterways into fast-moving systems carrying enormous force. Water levels rise, currents accelerate and debris hidden below the surface becomes difficult to detect.

A river that appears calm from shore may conceal powerful currents capable of carrying a person, boat or personal watercraft downstream far

faster than expected.

Fallen trees, submerged branches and debris create deadly hazards known as "strainers" that allow water to pass through while trapping people and watercraft underneath. Dams and spillways present another threat. Rescue officials frequently warn that currents near dams can pull boats, jet skis and even strong swimmers into dangerous hydraulic conditions from which escape is difficult.

Drowning: A quiet death

Experts say one of the biggest misconceptions is that drowning looks dramatic. In reality, drowning is often silent.

Many victims never call for help. They simply disappear beneath the surface.

"The biggest factor for

survival is time," Great Lakes Surf Rescue Project Executive Director Dave Benjamin recently said while discussing a Lake Michigan drowning. Once a person goes under, rescuers have only minutes to reach them.

According to the DNR, more than 100 accidental drowning deaths occurred statewide in 2024, underscoring that these tragedies are not limited to oceans or large lakes. Rivers, ponds, retention basins and small bodies of water claim lives every year.

The latest victim

The response to Triolo's death highlighted the challenges facing rescuers.

On June 20, the Kankakee River claimed its latest victim, Angelo Triolo. At 6:19 p.m. on that Saturday, the Wilmington Fire Protection District responded to reports of a body floating in the Kankakee River near the Des Plaines Conservation boat launch. Firefighters launched a rescue boat, secured the scene and later assisted the Will County Coroner's Office with recovery efforts.

Fire District personnel, Wilmington ESDA members and an IDNR officer searched upstream and near the South Island Park dam for a watercraft believed connected to the incident. After an object was spotted near the dam, a Wilmington Fire District drone identified a registration number that was provided to investigators.

For emergency responders, such incidents are becoming an all-too-familiar part of summer.

For the public, the message is simple: Rivers deserve respect. Wear a life jacket. Check water conditions before launching. Stay clear of dams and spillways. Be especially cautious after heavy rain. Assume currents are stronger than they appear.

Because every summer, somewhere in Illinois, someone heads to the water expecting a day of recreation and never returns home.



Courtesy photo

STATE REPRESENTATIVE Jackie Haas (right) presents a certificate of appreciation to Katie and Chris Francis, and their children, during a recent visit to Proclamation Flowers of Wilmington as the June Local Business Spotlight.

Proclamation Flowers chosen for June business spotlight

For her June Local Business Spotlight,

State Representative Jackie Haas (R-Kankakee) recognized Proclamation Flowers in Wilmington for her June local business spotlight.

Rep. Haas toured the business and presented the owners with a certificate of appreciation for their dedication to the community.

"For this month's Local Business Spotlight, I am pleased to recognize Proclamation Flowers in Wilmington," said Rep. Haas. "For the past decade, Katie and Chris Francis have built a business that provides beautiful, locally grown flowers while creating unique experiences for visitors."

Proclamation Flowers was founded in 2016 after Katie and Chris Francis moved to Wilmington, where Chris was raised. Looking for a way to spend more time outdoors, they converted a sheep pasture on the Francis family farm into a flower field and began selling flowers at local farmers markets.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they expanded their business to include on-farm you-pick events and wedding florals.

Today, the flower field has grown to five times its original size, and they have provided flowers for more than 200 weddings. In addition to growing flowers, Proclamation Flowers offers visitors a variety of experiences, including yoga in the flower field and photography sessions throughout the season.

"I commend Katie and Chris for their commitment to preserving their family's farming tradition. Their hard work and investment in the community have made Proclamation Flowers a valued part of Wilmington and the surrounding area, and I am honored to recognize them this month."

Proclamation Flowers is located approximately one mile south of Wilmington on Illinois 102. For more information, visit their website at ProclamationFlowers.com.

Village of Symerton passes budget & appropriation ordinance

PUBLIC NOTICE

Legal Public Notice of the Village of Symerton, Will County, Illinois, pursuant to 65 ILCS 5/1-2-6. Passage of a proposed appropriation ordinance and budget document for the fiscal year of 2026-2027 was considered at a public meeting on June 8, 2026, and passed by the Village Board of Trustees, 18385 W. Commercial Street, Symerton, Illinois.

A copy of the ordinance and budget is available to the public for viewing and inspection by contacting the office of the Village Clerk, Village Hall, 18385 W. Commercial Street, Symerton, Illinois during regular working hours at (815) 476-6266.

Dated this 8th day of June 2026.

Eli Geiss, Mayor
Published in the Free Press Advocate on July 1, 2026.

Attorney Korst files Brookman estate claim

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF SHIRLEY M. BROOKMAN, Deceased;
No. 26 PR 000315
CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given to creditors of the death of Shirley M. Brookman, of Shorewood, Illinois. Letters of Office were issued on May 29, 2026, to Thomas R. Podlesny and Robert Ward, as Independent Co-Executors, whose attorney is Michael J. Korst, Michael J. Korst, P.C., 2720 Caton Farm Road, Joliet, Illinois 60435.

The estate will be administered without Court supervision, unless under Section 28-4 of the Probate Act (755 ILCS 5/28-4) any interested person terminates independent administration at any time by mailing or delivering a petition to terminate to the Circuit Court.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the office of the Clerk of the Court at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with either Thomas R. Podlesny, 50992 Post Oak Lane, Naples, Florida 34105, or Robert Ward, 808 Abbeywood Drive, Shorewood, Illinois 60404, as Independent Co-Executors, whose attorney is Michael J. Korst, Michael J. Korst, P.C., 2720 Caton Farm Road, Joliet, Illinois 60435 or both, on or before December 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 claimant to the representative and to the attorney within ten (10) days after it has been filed.

Michael Korst
For the Estate of
Shirley M. Brookman, Deceased
Michael J. Korst, P.C.
Attorney at Law
2720 Caton Farm Road
Joliet, Illinois 60435
P. 815.609.8080
F. 815.609.8071
Published in the Free Press Advocate, Wednesday, June 17, 24, and July 1, 2026.

Fireworks, continued from page 1

opening during the May demonstration," Dietz explained.

The new location, however, required spectators to shift from the traditional open viewing area along the riverbank to locations deeper inside the park.

"Viewing was restricted in some areas of the park due to the trees," Dietz admitted. "But where most of the crowd sat it was wide open and an impressive show."

Some spectators commented that the fireworks appeared much closer than in previous years. Dietz said that perception was largely due to the different viewing angles and the larger shells being used.

"For anyone who thought they were significantly closer, the actual distance compared to the old location was only

about 10 feet," he said.

Throughout the evening, members of the Wilmington Emergency Services and Disaster Agency (ESDA) directed spectators toward the best viewing locations while maintaining safe distances from the launch area.

ESDA Director Dennis Housman said the new setup was successful overall but acknowledged there are a few details that could be refined before the next major display.

"A few things may need to be tweaked," Housman said, noting that officials will evaluate crowd flow and viewing areas before the city's next fireworks event.

Fortunately for Wilmington residents, they won't have to wait long to see RKM Fireworks return.

The company is already scheduled to provide the fireworks display

during Catfish Days later this month. While the Catfish Days show will be slightly shorter—expected to run between 15 and 20 minutes—spectators can expect the same style of high-altitude effects and thunderous bursts that impressed crowds during Freedom Rocks.

Sense Your Beauty files as new business

PUBLIC NOTICE

Assumed Name
Publication Notice
Certificate 35590 was filed in the office of the County Clerk of Will County on June 9, 2026, wherein the business firm of Sense Your Beauty, located at 131 S. Main Street, Wilmington, IL 60481 was registered;

that the true or real name or names of the person or persons owning the business, with their respective post office address(es), is/are as follows:
Laurie A. Fuehringer Rosa
28 Siskel Road
Gardner, IL 60424

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and Official Seal at my office in Joliet, Illinois, this 9th day of June, 2026.

Annette Parker
Will County Clerk
Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, June 17, 24, and July 1, 2026.

Petition filed to change name of Montes de Oca

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

Case No. 2026MR236
In the Matter of the Petition of ABIGAIL MONTES de OCA, A Minor by Parent or Guardian ADRIANA RIVERA, For Change of Name, Petitioners, vs. JHONATAN MONTES de OCA, And all unknown fathers, Respondent

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION

In the matter of the Petition for Change of Name of ABIGAIL MONTES de OCA, a female child. JHONATAN MONTES de OCA, take notice that a Petition was filed in the Circuit Court of Will County, Illinois for the change of name of a child named ABIGAIL MONTES de OCA.

Now, therefore, unless you JHONATAN MONTES de OCA, and all whom it may concern, file your answer to the Petition or otherwise make an Appearance, therein, in the said Will County Circuit Court, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois, on or before the 17th day of July, 2026, at 9 a.m. in courtroom A236, a default may be entered, to change the name of ABIGAIL MONTES de OCA, to ABIGAIL RODRIGUEZ will be entered in accordance with the prayer of said Petition.

Signed by Adriana Rivera, petitioner
Published in the the Free Press Advocate on June 24, July 1 and July 8, 2026.

Notice by publication for Helder name change

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

Case No. 2026MR000264
In the Matter of the Petition of AUTUMN LYNN HELDER, A Minor, by Parent/Guardian KIMBERLE A MEYER, For Change of Name, Petitioners, vs. JACOB HELDER, And all unknown fathers, Respondent

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION

In the matter of the Petition for Change of Name of AUTUMN LYNN HELDER, a female child. You, JACOB HELDER, are hereby notified that this case has been commenced and is pending against you, asking for the entry of an Order changing the name of AUTUMN LYNN HELDER to AUTUMN LYNN MEYER and other relief. UNLESS YOU FILE YOUR ANSWER or otherwise file your appearance in this case in the office of the Clerk of this Court, WILL COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 100 WEST JEFFERSON STREET, JOLIET, ILLINOIS, on or before 9 a.m. AUGUST 7, 2026, in room 905, A JUDGMENT BY DEFAULT MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU FOR THE RELIEF ASKED IN THIS COMPLAINT.

Signed Kimberle A Meyer, petitioner
Published in the the Free Press Advocate on July 1, 8 and 15, 2026.



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Eric D. Fisher, publisher

158 years of fire fighting, it started with a fire

Probably the first thing mankind did after inventing fire, was figure out how to control it. That problem still has not been totally solved. In the 19th century, wooden buildings coupled with open flames for heat and light made fire a town's number one enemy. In the bitter cold of 1868 Wilmington stared that enemy in the face.



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

A little after midnight on January 18, 1868 a fire broke out at the store of M. A. Hirsch, No. 83 Water Street. We read the following description from the Wilmington Independent. "The building is supposed to have caught from a defective flue, and was so enveloped in flames, when assistance arrived that it was found impossible to save it.

The flames spread rapidly to the adjoining buildings and soon carried away the building known as the "old tavern," occupied by Mr. W. H. Sherry, tailor, and Mr. Eisenger, as a boot and shoe shop. On the other side, the store of Mrs. Rolland & Co. dry

cigar store; and last the meat market of Joseph Burton. The saloon of W. B. Walker had a narrow escape, and Burney's livery stable was twice on fire, and only escaped on account of the roof being well covered with snow." Ed Conley, foreman of the newspaper's printing office was hailed as a hero. He was among the people rushing around trying to put out the fire when a woman approached him, telling him her baby was still in a burning building. His actions are documented like this, "The solicited Major (Conley's nickname) flew to the rescue, and soon appeared in Willard & Juke's with his little charge, the latter having, however, sustained a sever injury on the face from a brick or some other missile during the transit. The little one is no better at last account -

goods was so on wrapped in the devouring element and destroyed. Next was a small building occupied by Matthew Hunter as a tobacco and probably never will be."

Since Wilmington had never experienced a huge fire before, the thought of a fire company had never entered the citizens' mind before the night of the fire. It was quickly apparent that one was needed and the following week a meeting at Empire Hall was held. The first thing on the agenda was to obtain money to purchase fire-fighting equipment. A committee was appointed to collect donations from merchants and citizens.

By February notice went out for volunteers. Since the first meeting was held at Empire Hall the new company was called the Empire Hook, Ladder and Bucket Co. No. 1 with Isaac Clute as the foreman. The group met monthly to drill.



A 1923 PHOTO of the Wilmington fire department in front of their then 55 year old fire station, now the home of the Wilmington Area Historical Society.

shirt with red lacings, and black pants, as uniforms." The Company marched in that year's 4th of July parade. The article about them tells us more. "The Company turned out about 50 strong, and with their new uniforms, and new apparatus trimmed beautifully with gay flowers, presented a most attractive appearance. The new building occupied by them is located

ed near the corner of Main and Jackson streets, and is fast being competed. It is 20 by 40 feet and two stories in height. The upper floor will be used as a Town Hall, for council meetings, etc., and the elections will be held in the building. We are not anxious for a chance for the Company to display its manner of doing business at a conflagration, but we predict that when the time does come

the members will be found 'up and dressed' for business, and that they are a most useful body of men." Although the city paid for the new building, the fire fighters weren't paid for putting their life on the line. To compensate them, Mayor J. D. Henderson put forth a motion; the city council voted unanimously to exempt the members of the Company from poll tax, a savings of \$2 a year.



MS. SERRANO/MRS. PAGE'S 5th graders at Stevens Intermediate School who made the Honor Roll/High Honor Roll include (from left): Cinthia Gonzalez, Hadley Rodriguez, Olivia Contreras, Stone Benson, Uziah Sanchez, Mackenzie Gillis, Penelope Senter, Audrey Lockwood, Oliver Prendergast, Raymond Keane, Haley Lindemulder, Bailey Drennan, and Adalyn Barton.

WMS honor roll for the semester

Wilmington Middle School students were recognized for their academic achievements during the second semester, earning placement on either the High Honor Roll or Honor Roll.

Sixth Grade

High Honor Roll: Brayden Brockman, Ian Browning, Eliania Busby, Vivienne Ceci, Graham Dillon, Samuel Goodwin, Bennett Hess, Elena Langusch, Devyn Pomykala and Brady Van Duyne.

Honor Roll: Carson Alsbury, Noah Barajas, Liam Brueggert, Aislynn Carrico, Amelia Carroll, Ana Carroll, Andrea Chandler, Matthew Chiappetta, Chase Combes, Leland Combes, Jude Corlett, Charlotte Crutchfield, Cheyenne Deane, Gwendolyn Deninger, Ryan Dietz, Lilly Donnelly, Patrick Flynn, Louis Gaspar, Elly Grygiel, Aiden Guzman, Noah Hansen, Steven Hester, Ian Issert, Sawyer Jandura, Chanze Jurkowski, Jocelyn Kaniewski, Elliana Kavanaugh, Krystal Kelley, Rose Krug, Owen Lillis, Katelyn McDevitt, Skylar McGonagle, Fiona Medlin, Michael Morency, Charlotte Paulsen, Piper Proffitt, Katelyn Pulaski, Paislee Ray, Alexandra Skaggs, Hunter Smalley, Madison Smith, Julian Subach, Kailey Sukle, Teagan Tenn, Westin Thompson, Kinley Van Duyne, Jayden Vance, Nicholas Wells, Marlee Zak and Anthony Zarantenello.

Seventh Grade

High Honor Roll: Maeve Beasley, Maeve Bryant, Emma Corlett, Declan Crutchfield, Madelynn Cutter, Aiden Dumycz, Aria Jandeska, Grace Keane, Bentley Key, Lexy Locascio, Caleb Machalek, Grace Martin, Daniel McMicken, Ryder Meskill, Brianna Musick, Aryanna Princko, Natasha Rivera, Lucy Rozak, Madison Smith, Gawain Spangler, Katherine Staton, Kennedy Tafoya, Nolan Van Duyne and Emily Vanduyne.

Honor Roll: Laura Allen, Noah Beck, Kylie Burgess, Rocco Ceci, Sawyer Cravens, Avry Crisman, Aaron Damian,

Brooke Dickover, James Georgeff, Daniel Gonzalez, Keely Henke, Paityn Hester, Rylee Hollingsworth, Gabriel Holm, Harper Hunley, Cruz Islas, Aidric Johnson, Morgan Kelly, Chloe Kohl, Jacob Leonard, Abigail Long, Jonathan Long, Else Luchene, Jaxson Mack, Ian Mitchell, Zukari Moss, Sophie Palmer, Damon Peters, Blake Planinsek, Sutton Proctor, Jose Rojo, Aleah Sanchez, KJ Skole, Karington Smith, Riley Stiehler, Mason Strohm, Liam Sukley, Ryan Sukley, Brie Talley, Nathan Talley, Lily Turley, Carson Virgin, Willow Weathersby, Allie White, Brayden White and Emmaleigh Workman.

Eighth Grade

High Honor Roll: Audrey Woodard, Landon Bennett-DeVault, Tessa Biskupski, Aiden Browning, Nathan Cutter, Raelynn Grygiel, Holly Holm, Aiden Lawson, Henry Lewis, Kaylee Lovig, Layla Pape, Charlie Prendergast, Tyler Redwitz, Markus Sogale, Jayce Strong, Tandon Sukle and Jackson Van Duyne.

Honor Roll: Caden Argenta, Payden Backhoff, Lillian Bailey, Raeleigh Bailey, Bristol Billingsley, Skylar Boersma, Amber Bradley, Christopher Brueggert, Hayley Carrillo, Syllas Castleberry, Andres Diaz, Dylan Dietz, Chloe Eisenhour, Madison Etchison, Mason Etchison, Michael Etchison, Jack Grygiel, Aiden Gunty, Kate Guzman, Kati Guzman, Claire Hall, Mason Hansen, Russell Hawkins, Talon Hincherrick, Oliver Kruck, Zackary Latham, Johanna Laud, Carissa Leonard, Brooklyn Long, Kensington Lupinski, Baylee McNerney, Luke Medlin, Anthony Miraglia, Lily Mitchell, Erik Morris, William Panepinto, Edie Petrovich, Aubrey Ptacek, Aiden Riggs, Cooper Rivera, Madison Rivera, Brysen Ruggiero, Carissa Sapp, Riley Shepherd, Gage Sorensen, Hannah Stiehler, Isaac Svartoiien, Jackson Sweeney and Tucker Thompson.

School officials congratulated all students for their hard work and dedication in the classroom during the second trimester.



MS. GIANCARLO'S 5th grade Honor Roll/High Honor Roll Class at Stevens Intermediate School includes (front, from left): Olivia Jimenez, Sarabella Morris, Conner Perry, Emma Davis, Kali Lund, Alyssa Witvoet, Addelyn Gorges, Lyla Marasco and Emma Holm. Back row: Evelyn Turley, Elle Del Real, Carter Alexander, Colt Backhoff, Dakota Knight, Ariabella Brady, Camden Peck-Roark, Parker Mack, Edwin Johnson, Rocky Meskill and Connor Kruchten.



MRS. LONG'S 5th graders at Stevens Intermediate School who made the Honor Roll/High Honor Roll includes (from left, front): Laila Pasakarnis, Sadie Robinson, Mykinley Barnett, Eva Skole, Jonah Wallace, and Lane Rossi. Back row: Benjamin Derucki, Autumn Dempsey, Scotland Henke, Gianna Becker, Paisley Planinsek, Cinthia Gonzalez, Jaylah Enriquez, Logan Senior, Thomas Van Tilburg, Hunter Stepanek, Brock Planinsek, Jaxon Thompson and Daniel Rozak.

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Don't fix it

One of the things my dad used to always say: "If it ain't broke don't fix it." Wish he was still with us so he could tell our hapless president...

v/r Steve

Looks like a bordello

WILMINGTON—The only person who is solely responsible for the DC Reflection pond's failure is the guy who gave the no-bid contract to a unqualified donating friend. He rushed chemical coating processes to fit his schedule, chemicals don't care about schedules they require proper preparation, exact coating application and most important proper curing time before moving to next step. You can't drive a motor brigade of politicians over a job half complete. Only a fool would do that on an ongoing jobsite. No one sabotaged that pond, those added chemicals reacted with newly laid chemicals. Rose Garden destroyed, East Wing demolished with no federally mandated plans, Oval Office now looks like a 70s bordello. Everything he has a hand in is a debacle sooner or later, this time sooner. Now, release the Epstein files.

River is dangerous

WILMINGTON—I'm sorry but not surprised that the Kankakee River has claimed yet another life. The Kankakee River is dangerous under normal circumstances. After heavy rain, the risks triple. Strong currents, hidden debris, drop offs, and higher levels of bacteria are some of the hazards. Maybe the town needs to put out warnings by the river or they need to write something on their website. I had a cousin who drowned in a river loaded with debris after a storm. She got injured in a logjam and was unable to escape. The dangers of rivers are usually below a deceptively calm surface. Let's make sure people understand.

And I mean idiot

SHADOW LAKES—Dan Hill, I just watched J.B. Pritzker on T.V. he compared protecting abortion to the holocaust. Is this idiot and I mean idiot have any sense of killing people from abortion to the holocaust. This guy in my opinion is aWhen I was married I did not and could not afford a child. My wife got pregnant. She asked me, "should I get an abortion?" This was in the early seventies. I said absolutely not. You cannot kill somebody because you can't afford them and these women that get pregnant because they opened their legs, well your taking the responsibility at the time of having sex. Thank you.

All bureaucrats

SHADOW LAKES—We've been here since 1989. But what does this association do? You look around, they have these meetings and they have all these bureaucrats. All these people in the office they just bump into each other. What do they do? They all do what Wayne Kancler is doing. And why doesn't this association honor the freedom of information act and tell us how much money was spent by this guy Wayne Kancler and his associate that was fired. Tell us what these court costs were. And what did they cost us?

Warn of river danger

BRAIDWOOD—Glad to finally see some news about the weather we've been having. It's dangerous and we need to stay alert. Why wasn't there anything in the paper about the death on the Kankakee River? Family was out fishing the Saturday night it happened. Had to find out in another paper that some guy died. We noticed when we were fishing that the river was running fast and had all kinds of stuff floating and submerged, lots of tree limbs on the bottom. That's dangerous for people trying to swim or in kayaks. Media and city government needs to warn people not to go in the river and to stay inside during storms. It's a dangerous year all around.

Editor's note: A Tuesday morning press time prevented us from getting the details from official sources in time. By 3:30 p.m. an article about Angelo Triolo's death was posted in the online edition of Free Press Newspapers.

Why the black pad?

WILMINGTON—On FOX and Friends, the daily news program, I noticed something. The only time they put a black pad on their white couch is when the cur-

rent President of the United States Donald J Trump sits on it. Must be some kind of Secret Service contraption to safe guard the Commander in Chief, right?

Needs vs. wants

BRAIDWOOD—During last week's Braidwood City Council meeting, Commissioner Walsh hit the nail on the head when he said that the city needs to prioritize needs over wants. The Mayor on the other hand is big about wants over needs. Does the city need a new town center, a dog park, string lights on main street, a selfie mural, and other visual amenities? Or, does the city need critical infrastructure improvements such as miles of updated water mains and sewer lines, a new water tower, miles of sidewalk improvements or additions, miles of roadway resurfacing, fire hydrant installation on stretches of roadways without adequate protection, roof replacements on city owned buildings and other vital improvements? The focus needs to be on the needs. The things that are critical for keeping our community operational, safe and accessible. Not on the things which the Mayor believes is going to get him reelected next April. Millions of dollars out of the tax payers pockets for a huge town center, a dog park a selfie wall and string lights on Main Street which could have been used to make critical infrastructure improvements to our community. The city council obviously needs a lesson in needs vs. wants.

America's Hitler

WILMINGTON—J.D. Vance once referred to Trump as America's Hitler. But he meant it as a compliment.

Take control, parents

WILMINGTON—I am watching the Channel 9 news. They're showing these teens that are being interviewed in Chicago about, I guess having more freedom for their gatherings. They've complained about a lot of different things which I can understand. But when are parents going to take control of these stupid kids, which are raised by stupid parents, to respect their parents, respect the police, and anyone older than them. And get off the stupid computer or cell phone.

Examples of losers

BRAIDWOOD—Sending 5,000 Marines. Time passes, sending 2,500 Marines. Now going to send ICE agents, the most examples of losers. Must be something to have so many to use. Makes me confident that my not voting for him was an observant thing. Me being an inducted "drafted" loser.

Impacting water tables

BRAIDWOOD—In the 1970s riding my bicycle into the construction site of the atomic reactor at Braidwood, the extreme smell of gasoline gave thoughts that they must have been using it to kill bugs in the soil and keep away for some time after. Now, in 2026, I read gasoline causes tritium. If data centers use gasoline when they build their massive facilities in rural farm areas, water tables will be impacted. Oh, that's where we live, as do our neighboring communities, you guys.

Vote for bin Laden

WILMINGTON—If Osama bin Laden was alive he could run for office as a Democratic in New York and win. They forgot.

Good for the goose...

WILMINGTON—I do not like Trump-enabler Todd Blanche but I agree with a recent comment he made about people at the Reflecting Pond. "Law enforcement continues to do what it does – move to disrupt and hold accountable those allegedly plotting to do harm on the White House Grounds." I certainly hope that holds true for the recent destruction of the East Wing of the White House and the destruction of the South Lawn and Ellipse where the cage matches took place. That property does not belong to Trump. What's good for the goose ...

Evil siren's song

WILMINGTON—The people of Albania are marching in the streets to protest the sale of their fragile ecosystems to the resort development proposed by Ivanka Trump and Jared. Is there no place on earth safe from the evil grasp of this greedy couple? Ivanka gives her sales pitch in a demure whisper but hers is the evil siren song. And, like the rest of the world, Albania wants nothing of the deceit and destruction of any Trump, Ivanka or otherwise. In a concerted effort to fight this proposal and throw their corrupt Prime Minister out of office the Albanian people have launched the 'Flamingo Revolution.' In fact, a worldwide movement is growing to throw the greedy bums like Trump out who are cheating the people and destroying the planet. Does Ivanka love the simple harmony of God's creatures as she pretends? Of course not, she is a Trump, despised by the entire world.

Irene



Great job, Wilmington

WILMINGTON—I'd just like to say how impressed I am with how Wilmington has developed over the years. We enjoyed the party in the park tonight. You could tell everyone was enjoying themselves, kids running everywhere, people smiling, laughing and having a good time. The band was great. The food trucks looked like they were doing well. The park was in great condition. And honestly, the fireworks were the best I've seen in years. Great job, mayor, city council, all the people who work behind the scenes, you all are part of a great city. Good job Wilmington. It was very enjoyable.

Say no to lies

WILMINGTON—As we approach the 250th Anniversary of this country I noticed something in the last 10 -15 years that stands out from before. The way everything is called bad or the constant repetitive fear mongering. Every single day we are fed tall tales of everybody coming to get you, those people will take over, those people will ruin America, those people are all evil. All nonsense, no one is coming, there is no bogeyman, no grand maniacal scheme. He sows nothing but division and hatred intentionally. The more both sides of America fight and argue the more the billionaires and this administration steal and manipulate to strengthen their wallets and their grip on power. Let's enjoy the 4th like we used to, united, friendly, no infighting. Let's say no to obvious lies and blatant exaggeration. This country is no longer affordable and that was intentional. Put behind those obvious BS stories that get repeated daily. We know right from wrong, believe what's in your heart, your parents instilled that in you. Let us regular Americans take back what is being stolen by the greedy, powerful and soon to be unemployed top 5% of this country. Strength in numbers not being divided. Happy 4th of July to all.

One step away

SHADOW LAKES—Remember this when you vote! Socialism is only one step away from Communism.

Obediently, Margot Lane

Water to wine

WILMINGTON—The we got Trump this week word is algae but remember when the great and powerful Obama said he would turn algae in 25 percent of the gas we needed. Guess he should have stuck to water wine.

Enforce the enforcer

BRAIDWOOD—If I let my grass grow a little too tall in my back yard I get a notice to mow it, code = enforced. Two blocks down the street on English they are growing flowers in the ditch, across the street from what I'm assuming is a "code enforcement" enforcer. I can only assume because while the charger in the driveway does say Braidwood Code Enforcement, the car hasn't moved in months. Right around the corner on Reed Road, another neighbor of the code enforcer is just parking his RV and trailer and whatever on the sidewalk. The kids can walk on Reed Road, they'll be fine. It really begs the question why? Why are you ignoring your neighbors blatant violations you can see from your home. But punishing the rest of us for what we do in our back yards? You can't just pick and choose because you don't want to upset your neighbors. It's crazy to me that the one street in town where you can visibly see a code enforcement officer lives, seemingly has the most code violations. There's two different people using the easement as a salvage yard on the corner of English and Division. Again within a blocks distance of this code enforcement car. I just don't get it? If you are gonna selectively do the job as to not make your neighbors mad, how is that fair for the rest of us in town? So many issues in this town are predicated by this sort of behavior. It's one big club, and none of us are in it, unless we brush shoulders with the right folks.

He deserves ridicule

WILMINGTON—We, the people, take great delight reflecting on the algae growing in Trump's reflecting pool which amply reflects what a slimeball Trump is

as the slime accumulates. Although simple modesty could help Trump get through his many humiliations, Trump doesn't seem to know how incompetent he is or simply doesn't care. Even the Bible doesn't suffer fools such as Trump gladly especially fools that are cruel. In other words, Trump deserves ridicule considering that he himself is all about vengeance and retribution. So we take great delight in Trump's blunders. We laugh and point at the reflecting pool because that, my friends, is the only joy we have considering Trump makes life difficult for us all and has dragged our country down from the greatest nation in the world to the laughingstock of the planet.

Gloria

Facebook folly

COAL CITY—Going back decades, I often think about the kids in school who could hardly wait for morning and afternoon recess. Looking back now, I realize many of them simply loved escaping from thinking. Recess was freedom from structure, freedom from teachers expecting them to reason, learn and support their answers. It was a temporary vacation from discipline and accountability. The rest of us were supposedly taught how to learn. We were taught not to jump to conclusions, to follow the science, to seek the truth before inventing stories and to separate evidence from emotion before declaring outcomes as fact. It makes me wonder if the students who were never comfortable with learning—but loved recess—grew into adults who still spend their lives on recess. Their modern playground just happens to be Facebook. There, the guardrails are few. They can tease, threaten, bully, speculate, exaggerate, invent conspiracy theories, and congratulate one another for repeating them. In many circles, lying has become more popular than learning. Need examples? Data center opponents on the radio. The very first answer they gave was false. They presented themselves as though they were speaking for Coal City residents when, in reality, they are not citizens of Coal City. If the opening statement is false, why should anyone assume the rest is factual? The Diamond water bill controversy. Residents directed threats and hatred toward the mayor over minimum water bills while completely misunderstanding the issue. The discussion is not about the quantity of water used. It is about the proportional sharing of infrastructure investment. Here, facts take a back seat to cheapness. Facebook campaigns to "overthrow" local government. Petitions, advisory referendums, and repeated claims that officials have already approved a data center are presented as though they are established facts. Advisory referendums are not law. Petitions are not democracy by themselves. Allegations of secret approvals require evidence, not imagination. So, what do the people who never really left the classroom do when they hear shouts from the playground? Simple. They wait for the ending recess bell. Then they quietly return to studying the facts while watching the lifelong recess crowd swirl when today's assignment is announced: "Please put your evidence in writing." That is when the playground becomes very quiet. Too much playtime and not enough learning is why dunce caps were created. Adults manufacturing conflict on Facebook instead of contributing to society shows a notable waste of talent. More than anything, it is a depressing way to be remembered after the final bell in the school of life rings.

Keep mouth shut

After 250 years of freedom of speech, we are still irritated at people who believe there is no limit to that freedom. But nothing can be limitless. Or can it? Maybe it is not the extreme of the insult, vulgarity, or hate expressed but the ear that hears it. However, that creates another problem, if we do not process what we hear then we are guilty of ignoring someone's freedom. To them it is an insult, to us it is the only way to say we disagree. Just maybe, keeping your mouth shut at times is the best freedom of speech. That of controlling insults vulgarities and hatred by thought instead of deed.

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Is mega drought in the American West the new normal?

Dear EarthTalk: Is the megadrought in the American West a new normal or just an anomaly? If the former, how should we be adjusting our lifestyles accordingly?
—J.G., via email

EARTH TALK
Questions & Answers About Our Environment

Research at The University of Texas shows that dry spells can be seen throughout our planet's history, when warm waters directed storms away from the West during periods of high temperatures. However, with climate change worsening, scientists warn that this pattern, that would have ebbed and flowed in the past, will now be last longer.

Furthermore, conditions are worsening each year, especially as we use more and more water for new industries. Professor Jay Famiglietti, who teaches at Arizona State's School of Sustainability, noted that "in many areas, groundwater pumping is already the only lifeline—and it's a ticking time bomb."

The megadrought may well extend as long as humans continue to warm the planet.

A crucial example of this is the Colorado Water Basin, which provides natural resources to seven basin states. Amy Haas, Executive Director of the Colorado River Authority of Utah says: "What I think we're seeing on the Colorado River is more in line with what we've coined 'aridification,'" the process by which a climate becomes increasingly dry.

Just this century, the Basins' natural flow has dropped 13 percent, posing big risks to this region, since so many communities rely on the water that this basin provides.

It is important that we take action on not only an individual level, but in how we approach water use, climate mitigation and sustainability. Already, farmers are looking at ways to save water through plant-



ing crops that can thrive in drier climates. There have also been agreements made to reduce water use, but further policy changes are needed to actually make a difference.

In daily life, particularly if you live in an area that faces these issues, taking steps such as fixing leaky faucets or creating a water smart yard can help control wastefulness. For instance, did you know that every year, the average household leaks 38,000 liters of water? Fixing these small issues can save you money as well as conserve water.

For your lawn, incorporate more plants that are drought resistant, and install drip systems instead of using sprinklers. Another way you could cut back on water would be switching up your routine to take a 5-minute shower—it could save more than 100 liters.

Lastly, either reduce the number of times you do laundry, or update your machine so it is more efficient, which could use only 50 liters per cycle instead of over 100. These small changes, as well as spreading awareness among your community, are needed if we are to adjust to the megadrought that may never end.

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Ice Cream Social returns to Grundy Bank

Grundy Bank is excited to announce the return of its annual Ice Cream Social, a longstanding summer tradition that brings the community together for sweet treats and a meaningful cause.

The event will take place on Friday, July 17, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. in the Grundy Bank Courtyard at 201 Liberty St. in Downtown Morris, in the alleyway next to Letty Mae's.

"Our annual Ice Cream Social is the perfect opportunity to create summer memories with family and friends while also helping local students prepare for a successful school year," said Ava Terry, Marketing Director of Grundy Bank.

"What could be better than enjoying delicious custom ice cream sundaes while supporting the youth in our community? It's truly a sweet way to give back!"

Guests can enjoy build-your-own sundaes featuring their choice of vanilla or chocolate ice cream from Sweet Tooth, along with unlimited toppings including Oreos, M&Ms, marshmallows, cookie wafers, and more. Attendees may also choose a root beer float and will receive one of the event's popular color-changing souvenir cups while supplies last.

Ice cream scoops will be available for just 25

cents each, making the event a fun and affordable outing for families, friends, and community members of all ages.

All proceeds from the Ice Cream Social will benefit We Care of Grundy County's Back-to-School Program which helps provide local students with essential school supplies for the upcoming academic year.

"We appreciate Grundy Bank's continued support of our Back-to-School Program through the Ice Cream Social," said Eric Fisher, Executive Director of We Care of Grundy County. "It's a fun community event that also helps us purchase school supplies for local children as they prepare for the upcoming school year. Grundy Bank does so much for our community, and we are grateful for their ongoing partnership."

Applications for the program are available at We Care located at 530 Bedford Rd, Morris, or on their website at wecareof-grundy.com.

Community members are encouraged to attend with their family and

friends to enjoy some sweet treats and support a wonderful cause.

Iowa State dean's list

Five area students attending Iows State University were among more than 11,200 students recognized for outstanding academic achievement by being named to the 2026 spring semester Dean's List.

Local students include: Jacob Piatak of Coal City, Jack Krall and Caroline Kulach both of Custer Park also Connor Cieszkiewics and Christian Koca both of Wilmington.

Students named to the Dean's List must earn a grade point average of at least 3.50 on a 4.00 scale.

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OBITUARIES

Ruby Girot

BRAIDWOOD—Ruby Jean Girot “Jean,” 97 of Braidwood, passed away on Wednesday, June 24, 2026, at Arc at Dwight. Born on Sept. 22, 1928, in Custer Township, IL, to Lyle and Wilma (née Patterson) Crater. She attended school in the Custer Park School District and was a graduate of the Mary Roberts Beauty Culture School in Chicago in 1945. On Oct. 15, 1946, she married Lawrence James Girot at St. Lawrence Catholic Church in South Wilmington. She was employed by Joliet Army Ammunition (APSA) for 17 years and then at the Social Security office in Kankakee for 13 years. She was a member of St. Lawrence Catholic Church and the Joliet Croatia Culture Club. Jean loved to polka dance. Thank you to her best friend, Rita, for being so special to her and helping her be worthy of the Lord’s promises. She deeply appreciated her nieces, Janet Anderson, Sue Suddick, Rosanne Kaffer, and Pat



Murphy, for always being there for her.

Surviving is her son, James (Judi) Girot of Braidwood; grandchildren: Jeff Girot, John Girot, and Chelsea Girot; four great-grandchildren; brother James Crater of Crestwood, IL; special friend Rita Werner; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Preceding her in death were her parents, Lyle and Wilma Crater; husband, Lawrence Girot (03-10-1996); son, Mike Girot; brother, William Crater; and sisters: Janet Larson, Agnes Starks, Helen Knight, and Patricia Albright.

Visitation will be held on Wednesday, July 1, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. until the time of the Mass of Christian Burial at 11:00 a.m. at St. Lawrence Catholic Church in South Wilmington. Father Stanley Drewniak will officiate. Interment will immediately follow at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Wilmington, IL.

John Pilbeam



DAPHNE, AL—John Pilbeam, 79, of Daphne, AL passed away peacefully on May 30, 2026. He was born on March 8, 1947 in Blue Island, IL, the son of Edward Pilbeam and Marion (Quinn) Pilbeam.



John always had an interest in planes. He was proud and also a hard worker. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1966-1970 during the Vietnam War. Later on he pursued his pilot license in the Kankakee area flying Cessna planes. In the late 1990s he retired from the ACME Steel plant on the south side of Chicago after 30+ years. It was at Sears, where he worked for another decade or so, where he met his beloved wife, Pam.

He loved his music loud. Being a drummer in a band along with his four brothers, pictures would occasionally fall off the walls of his parents house when they played back in Peotone. John also

loved hotrods and knew how to work on them.

John is survived by his children: Tracy Shaffer, Andy (Tiffany) Pilbeam, Jared Pilbeam, Hayley (Greg) Henke and Garret (Cara) Pilbeam; his grandchildren: Ally (Christian) Rettig, Nick (Anna) Shaffer, Keely Henke, Scotland Henke, Finley Pilbeam and Ace Pilbeam; his great-grandchildren: Cooper Rettig, Dean Rettig and Thomas Shaffer; his brothers: Jim (Audrey) Pilbeam, Jeff (Diane) Pilbeam, Jerry (Susan) Pilbeam and Joe (Julie) Pilbeam; and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife and his sister, Julie Fore.

The burial will be held at Peotone Cemetery on July 3, 2026 at 2 p.m.

Afterwards everyone is invited to Jared’s house in Wilmington for food and drinks.

Fred L. Hausman



COAL CITY—Fred L. Hausman, 89, of Coal City, passed away on Saturday, June 27, 2026 at the Illinois Veteran’s Home in LaSalle.



He was born on Jan. 27, 1937 in Marion, IL to Fred and Mary “Gen” (nee Hodges) Hausman. He served his country honorably in the United States Air Force from 1956-1960 and was stationed in Japan. After receiving his discharge, he worked for Carter Lumber as a bookkeeper, Fleur as a comptroller and finally for Mobil Refinery as an operator in Joliet from 1972 until his retirement in 1996. Fred married Pat G. Leroy on Sept. 7, 1968 at the First Christian Church in Joliet. Together they raised their son, Rob, and enjoyed their home on the river.

Fred had many interests and hobbies including stamp and coin collecting, gardening, tending to his flowers and enjoying his television programs and movies. He was a member of the Mason’s and had a

close church family with the Faith Baptist Church in Goose Lake.

He is survived by his son and his wife, Robert and Kristi Hausman; his granddaughter, Allison Hausman; his grandson, Logan Hausman; his stepgranddaughters, Emma (Michael) Hulbert and Abby Washburn; his great-grandchildren: Jenna Hulbert, Jackson Hulbert and Cassius Thompson; his brother, George (Cheryl) Hausman and special friends Bill and Linda Maher.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his wife of 50 years, Patricia G. Hausman in 2019.

Aqua cremation rites have been accorded. A private “Celebration of Life” will be held at a later date.

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

Ferrari Funeral Services of Coal City are entrusted with arrangements.

Emma Peters

COAL CITY—Emma “Jean” Brigid Peters, 80, of Coal City, passed away peacefully at her home on Sunday, June 28, 2026.



She was born on Jan. 29, 1946 in Elk Horn City, KY to Fonso and Blanche (nee Thacker) Wright. She grew up in her large family of 12 children. Jean married Frank J. Peters on Dec. 6, 1963 in Michigan. Together they raised two sons. She enjoyed tending to her vegetables and flower garden. Walleye fishing was a favorite way to enjoy the outdoors. When she lived on the family farm, she liked taking care of her chickens. Jean loved her dog, Jake and granddog, Nova.

She is survived by her husband of 62 years, Frank; her sons, Philip (Risa) Peters and Timothy (Mary Macon) Peters Sr.; her grandchildren: Meaghan Peters, Nathaniel Peters and Timothy Peters Jr. and her great-grandson, Carsten Peters. Also sur-

living are her siblings: Raymond “Cub” Wright, Pebble Hurley, Betty Davis, Dallas (Debby) Wright, Douglas (Linda) Wright, Audrey “Clyde” Wright, Bob (Jenny) Wright and Teresa Stewart. And family friend Victor Blair.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her grandson, Jaden Peters, and her siblings, Patty Perkins and Avonell Abshire.

Cremation rites have been accord-

ed. A Mass of Christian Burial will be at 10 a.m. on Friday, July 3, 2026 at the Assumption Catholic Church, 215 S. Kankakee Street in Coal City. Father Josh Miller will officiate and Deacon William Dunn will assist.

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

Ferrari Funeral Services of Coal City are entrusted with arrangements.

Walmart, Constellation announce long-term plan to buy electricity from Dresden

Constellation and Walmart have signed a long-term nuclear power purchase agreement (PPA) for electricity from Constellation’s Dresden Clean Energy Center near Coal City.

The agreement includes approximately 176 MW of wholesale supply, including 30 MW of expanded generating capacity.

Walmart will purchase energy, environmental attributes and capacity through two 15-year terms beginning in 2029 and 2030.

This agreement supports reliable nuclear energy in the region and enables planned uprates — efficiency upgrades that increase output from existing nuclear units without the need to build a new facility.

The agreement is expected to help Walmart access cleaner energy and strengthen local energy infrastructure.

“This agreement reflects long-term stewardship of critical infrastructure, the communities it serves, and the energy system that powers American growth,” said Jim McHugh, Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer, Constellation.

“Walmart’s commitment enables meaningful investment in the Dresden Clean Energy Center — bolstering reliability, sustaining local jobs and economic activity, and putting more dependable, emissions-free energy onto the Illinois power grid.”

Through uprates at the Dresden station, this agreement will provide enough new power to the grid to support Walmart’s previously announced high-tech perishable distribution center, currently in development in Belvidere, IL.

Together, these investments strengthen the local community by supporting jobs and enabling continued expansion of Walmart’s supply chain operations and workforce.

“Working with Constellation allows us to support new operations in Illinois while advancing our strategy in a way that prioritizes affordable, reliable, and clean energy for our business and the communities we serve,” said said Shayne Wahlmeier, SVP Energy – Walmart US.

We’re constantly evaluating new capabilities and energy solutions

that help ensure the electricity we rely on is dependable, responsibly produced, and built to support long-term growth.”

This agreement marks Walmart’s first nuclear PPA and is among the first of its kind between a large retailer and a nuclear energy facility in the United States.

The agreement follows Constellation’s December 2025 license renewal announcement for Dresden and supports continued investment in Dresden’s long-term reliability and performance.

Licensed to operate through 2049 and 2051, the Dresden Clean Energy Center provides baseload, reliable carbon-free electricity for the region and supports more than 1,100 family-sustaining jobs.

Constellation’s generation footprint produces enough energy to power more than eight million homes, and Walmart’s retail operations total approximately 175 stores and clubs with more than 55,000 associates in the state.

Morris Hospital nurse practitioner to discuss memory loss and dementia

As people age, changes in the brain increase the risk for developing memory loss, Alzheimer’s and other related dementias.

Learn how to take charge of your brain health by attending a free program presented by Amanda Benjamin, Advanced Practice Nurse with Morris Hospital Neurology Specialists, on Wednesday, July 8, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Morris Hospital YMCA, 2200 W. Dupont Avenue, Morris.

The program is free and open to the community as part of the Healthy Happens Here health and wellness seminar series offered through Morris Hospital and the YCMA.

During the program, Benjamin will explain how to manage risk factors that may prevent or delay



AMANDA BENJAMIN

dementia and memory loss.

To register, call the Morris Hospital YMCA at 815-513-8080, or go to www.morrishospital.org/events and select the category: Education Classes at the YMCA.

Lawmakers face a summer of data center negotiations

BY NIKOEL HYTREKAND
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

Lawmakers have a busy summer of negotiations ahead of them with pressure from both the governor’s office and their constituents to craft data center regulations that stakeholders and legislators can live with.

The pressure comes after lawmakers failed to pass any regulations during the spring session, despite widespread concerns from Illinois communities about data centers’ impact on energy demand, water, and quality of life.

Lawmakers say the issue is complex, and like with other energy-related bills, they needed more information and time to decide how to structure guardrails.

Early in June, Gov. JB Pritzker took executive action to pause tax benefits for data centers and called on the General Assembly to pass regulations that resemble those in the POWER Act, a bill that was discussed in committee meetings but was never voted on.

From 2020-2024, the state pledged about \$983 million in lifetime tax benefits to 27 data centers, according to a state report.

Rep. Ann Williams, D-Chicago, said lawmakers will continue negotiating data center regulations with stakeholders this summer.

“I support the pause while we get a handle on how we’re going to put some guardrails in place regarding data centers,” she said. “But I know some of my colleagues are very interested in the development and the job creation and the economic benefits that development on the scale of a data center can provide.”

Williams chaired three House

Executive Committee hearings about data centers and their effects on energy demand, water and Illinois communities. The hearings dealt with House Bill 5513, also known as the POWER Act.

The bill would have required data centers to pay for and supply their own renewable energy, track and report water usage and enter community benefits agreements with the municipalities where they’re based.

Williams said it’s normal for large bills dealing with energy-related issues to require a lot of negotiation and to take time to pass. The 2025 Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act and the 2021 Climate and Equitable Jobs Act both passed in veto sessions after failing to advance in the spring.

A last-minute push among some lawmakers to pause tax incentives also failed because there was disagreement in the House Democratic caucus, House Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch, D-Hillside, said.

“Not only did it struggle, it wasn’t even close in my caucus. I believe it was similar in the Senate,” Welch told Capitol News Illinois.

That hurdle is one of the major issues to overcome, and Williams said it will be important to strike a balance between economic development, protecting resources and protecting communities.

Communities around Illinois have resisted data centers, and there’s bipartisan interest in creating guardrails for them.

Lobbyists from stakeholder organizations said they’ve been ready to meet at the negotiating table and they’re only waiting for lawmakers to set dates.

“I think it’s unfortunate that we didn’t actually really begin any stakeholder negotiations,” Brad Tietz, director of state poli-

cy for the Data Center Coalition, said. “We were prepared and able to do that. It just never came to fruition.”

Tietz testified at every POWER Act hearing, and his position has long been that the industry can negotiate on energy, water reporting and community impact regulations, but he’s maintained the bill in question is too broad and it unfairly singles out data centers when industries like farming and manufacturing have similar energy and water impacts.

He said the Data Center Coalition suggested language to amend the Illinois Water Use Act of 1983 and require all large water users to report their usage. They’ve also suggested making the “bring your own clean energy” provision voluntary and incentivizing data centers to do it by letting them connect to the electricity grid faster.

The POWER Act made “bring your own clean energy” mandatory, but it also allowed data centers to connect to the grid faster for doing it, and for meeting other standards in the bill.

Tietz said real negotiations need to happen sooner rather than later.

“I think this kind of uncertainty is not helping the industry, but it’s also obviously not helping the communities as well,” he said.

Climate Jobs Illinois, a collection of labor organizations dedicated to a pro-worker, pro-climate agenda in Illinois, opposed Pritzker’s freeze on data center tax benefits, saying the move will send developers to other states where labor and environmental protections are weaker.

The organization declined to comment on what it wants in negotiations, saying it needs to see how the pause plays out.

Jen Walling, the executive director of the Illinois Environmental Council, said

she’s also ready to get into detailed negotiations.

The IEC is part of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, the group that has advocated for the POWER Act, and the bill contains their regulatory priorities.

“The coalition introduced the POWER Act because it offers the solutions Illinoisans – and this moment – are demanding,” they said in an emailed statement after Pritzker announced his tax benefit pause. “Consumers cannot afford more delays. Now is the time to begin negotiations on policies that will stop rising utility bills, protect our water, and end backroom development deals, and we look forward to working with the governor, legislators, and stakeholders to get this done in the Fall veto session.”

Walling said she expects the POWER Act to be pared back in some areas.

She said she expects something will pass either in veto session later this year or in the January lame duck session.

A key obstacle for getting regulations over the finish line, Walling said, was that both legislative chambers were rarely in session at the same time this year. Before May, the House and Senate were only in session at the same time for four weeks — two in February, one in March and one in April.

“And so there’s very little time to have in-person meetings that included leaders from both chambers. That made it really hard to get anything done,” Walling said.

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

All Illinois children to receive blood lead testing

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced universal childhood blood lead testing will take effect July 1, the culmination of a years-long effort to expand the number of children who receive such testing. Through the Childhood Lead Program, IDPH identifies children who have been exposed to lead and who may need health interventions to

address its effects. "There is no safe level of lead in the blood," said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. "Through our Childhood Lead Program, IDPH has identified thousands of children who have been exposed to lead, allowing for early intervention to address negative health effects and implementation of efforts to limit further exposure. With this move to universal child-

hood blood lead testing, IDPH is taking another step towards protecting the health and safety of Illinois' youngest residents." Previously, Illinois lead testing requirements applied to children living in "high-risk ZIP codes." Under the new standard that takes effect on July 1, all Illinois children are to be tested automatically at 12 and 24 months. All children six years of age and younger

are required to be assessed for lead exposure through the use of a questionnaire administered by a health care provider. Under Illinois law, blood tests that come back with confirmed lead levels in excess of 3.5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL) require a public health intervention. This includes a home inspection to determine the source of the lead contamination. If lead is

found, the inspector works with the resident to remove the sources of lead. In addition, a public health nurse will visit and educate the family on ways to protect children from the harmful effects of lead. Lead exposure can lead to damage to the brain and nervous system, slowed growth and developmental, behavioral and learning difficulties, among other challenges.

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A Mother Nature traffic jam

MOTORISTS PATIENTLY WAIT while a doe cares for her young in an unforgettable roadside scene. Pam Bennett of rural Coal City submitted this photo of a doe stopped in the middle of Coal City Road recently about 11:30 a.m., nursing her twin fawns. "Mom was very patient with them, and so were the autos, two in each direction," Bennett said. She was thankful the Mother Nature display lasted long enough for her to get her to snap a photo with her phone before they hurried off into the ditch.

Photo by Pam Bennett

Morris Hospital to host community blood drive

Morris Hospital is hosting a blood drive in cooperation with Versiti Blood Center on Friday, July 10, from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. in Conference Rooms 2 & 3 on the lower level of the hospital, 150 W. High Street in Morris. Those who donate will be helping replenish the local blood supply as Versiti supplies blood products for Morris Hospital. All blood types are needed.

Blood donors must be age 17 or older, weigh at least 110 pounds, be in good health and free from cold or flu symptoms on the day of donation. In Illinois, 16-year-olds may donate with written approval from a parent or guardian. The entire process for donating blood takes about 1 hour, including registration, a brief medical screening, blood collection and refresh-

ments. Donors should bring a photo ID with proof of age. Those planning to donate should eat a healthy meal and drink plenty of water before donating. To schedule an appointment, call Morris Hospital at 815-705-7386 or go to morrishospital.org/events and select Donate Blood. Walk-ins are welcome.

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Final call for Summerfest Flea Market vendors

Thursday is the final day to turn in vendor application packets for the 45th Annual Summerfest Flea Market, Arts & Crafts

Show which will take place on Saturday and Sunday July 18-19 in the Braidwood Park District's Old Smokey City Park from

9am to 5pm, both days. All vendor applications must be postmarked or email timestamped by Thursday July 2. Absolutely no late applications will be accepted. All payments must accompany applications.

page at www.braidwoodlionsclub.org or print the vendor application packet which includes all the details. Please be sure to read the terms & conditions before completing the application.

Anyone can join in... vendors, residents, businesses, organizations, youth groups, etc. Visit the Summerfest

For more information, please contact Flea Market, Arts & Crafts Show Vendor Coordinator Elaine Burd at (603)762-8872.

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Aqua Man – Aqua Illinois, Inc.
Mr. Lifer – Bradley-Bourbonnais Sportsmen's Club
Fallen Sportsman – Bradley-Bourbonnais Sportsmen's Club
Bourbonnais Citizens Party – Bourbonnais Citizens Party
J.R.'s Wally Walleye – Family of J.R. Black
Nimrod – LA Blanchette Agency
Hooli 26 – Holohan Heating & Sheet Metal
Jerry Forbes – Bourbonnais Friendship Festival

Shorty – Kankakee County Building Trades
Baby Huey – Aroma Park American Legion Post
COFU – The Thomas Family
A Fish Named Don – Kankakee Truck Equipment
Black Top – Kankakee Valley Construction Co.
Jackhammer – Laborers Local 751
Levi's Luscious Lunch – Levi's Garage
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MAC – Momence Anchor Club
Foreign Warrior – Kankakee VFW #2857
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Mr. Ringneck – Pheasants Forever of Kankakee County
Big John – Precise Painting

Joe – Rose Gianotti
Every Day's a Holiday – South Wilmington Sportsmen's Club
Dumpster Diver – United Disposal
"Chach" – Limestone Park District
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Klem – Herscher Auto Tech
MO-GAS – Momence Bottle Gas
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Let's Bounce – Bounce With Us
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Sun. June 28	Smallmouth Bass – Smallie Searchin Day	Kankakee River Trading Post
Mon. June 29	Rock Bass – Rock Mining Day	Nancy Witthoft
Tues. June 30	Flathead Catfish – Anderson Family	Channel Catfish – Sons of the American Legion
Wed. July 1	Northern Pike – Pike Plugging Day	Reed's Rent All
Thur. July 2	Crappie – Crappie Jigging Day	APBA
Fri. July 3	Walleye – Wally Walleye Day	Daily Journal
Sat. July 4	Any Species Excluding Catfish and Rough Fish	Kids Corkin Day – Kankakee Sportsmen's Club

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Buy Braidwood Summerfest ride armbands now

The Braidwood Summerfest Carnival is right around the corner. That means it's time to get your ride armbands early and save some money.

Ticket sales begin Thursday, July 2 and ends Thursday, July 16 at 3p.m. before the midway opens. Unlimited ride armbands are \$25 each, a savings of \$5 when purchased ahead of time.

These arm bands can be used on one of the following sessions.

Thursday, July 16, from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.; Friday, July 17, from 6 p.m. to 11 pm; Saturday, July 18, from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. or 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.; Sunday, July 19, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. or 6 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Mega Pass wristbands will again be offered. They are \$70 each in advance. On the midway they will be sold for \$80 each. These special wristbands may be utilized for the entire time of the carnival. Mega

Pass wristbands must remain on the person's wrist for the entire duration of the festival in order to be valid. But oh so worth the savings for \$10 each.

The First Presbyterian Church of Braidwood will be coordinating the pre-sale campaign and will receive a percentage from every pre-sale armband and mega pass sold in advance. Not only are you helping yourselves you are helping the Braidwood Lions Club and the Presbyterian Church.

Pre-sale passes are available at these fine locations. In Braidwood at Berkot's Super Foods, Ace Hardware, Hairagain, Rockin Robin's Hair Salon, Fossil Ridge Library and Braidwood City Hall.

In Godley at Clip & Sip Hair Salon and Shelley's Hair Salon. In Diamond at Midland State Bank.

Gas prices falling before holiday demand

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have fallen 5.1 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$4.08/g Monday, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

Prices in Illinois are 70.6 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 61.7 cents per gallon higher than a year ago.

With a couple exceptions, local gas has fallen below \$4/g.

In Wilmington, gas prices ranged from \$3.78/g at Amoco and other stations to \$3.94/g at Shell.

Braidwood gas was \$3.99/g across the board.

Coal City ran the gamut from \$3.99/g at Gas N Wash to \$4.12 at BP.

In Morris, the price range was from \$3.75/g at Pilot to \$3.89/g at Amoco.

It was about the same in Bourbonnais, with Gulf charging \$3.75/g up to \$3.89/g at BP.

"Average gasoline prices fell in 46 states over the last week, with diesel

declining in 49, pushing the national average to its lowest level since mid-March," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"The declines came despite a turbulent week, as fresh attacks were traded between the U.S. and Iran before both sides agreed to halt hostilities just in time Sunday, preventing what could have been a significant spike in oil prices.

"For now, GasBuddy anticipates the national average will continue drifting lower this week, though the situation remains anything but predictable. A handful of price-cycling states could see prices jump ahead of the July 4 holiday, while many states that already cycled higher last week should see prices fall back down."

The lowest price in the state yesterday was \$3.45/g while the highest was \$5.99/g.

The national average price of diesel has decreased 11.4 cents compared to a week ago and stands at \$4.876 per gallon.

Midewin offers July nature programs for young explorers

Young nature enthusiasts will have several opportunities to explore the outdoors this summer as the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie continues its popular "Midewin for Kids" educational series throughout July.

Designed for children ages 5 to 11, the free programs combine hands-on learning with outdoor adventure, helping youngsters discover the plants, animals and ecosystems that make Illinois' only national tallgrass prairie unique.

Programs will be held at the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Visitor Center and Administration

Building, located along Illinois Route 53 about two miles north of Wilmington. Some activities will take place outdoors at designated trailheads.

The July schedule begins with "Bird is the Word" from 10 to 11 a.m. Tuesday, July 7. Children will learn about prairie birds, their habitats and the important role they play in the ecosystem.

The popular "Batty Evening" program returns from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Thursday, July 9. Participants will meet at the Iron Bridge Trailhead parking lot to learn about bats and observe these nocturnal mammals as

they emerge at dusk.

Young naturalists can discover the sounds and habits of frogs and toads during "Croaking Around" from 10 to 11 a.m. Wednesday, July 15.

One of Midewin's signature attractions, the prairie's bison herd, will be highlighted during "The Bison Project" from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 21. The evening program will focus on the history, conservation and importance of the iconic animals that once roamed the Great Plains in vast numbers.

The month concludes with "Prairie Chalk Art" from 10 to 11 a.m. Wednesday, July 29. Participants will combine creativity with nature as they create artwork inspired by the prairie landscape.

Unless otherwise noted, all programs will be held at the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Welcome Center. Parents or guardians are required to remain with their children throughout each program.

The Midewin for Kids series is offered free of charge, but advance registration is required. Those interested in attending can register by emailing SM.FS.Midewin_RSVP@usda.gov or calling (815) 423-6370.

Morris Hospital dietitian to discuss nutrition for kids

A dietitian from Morris Hospital will present a free program, "Nutrition for Active Kids," on Tuesday, July 14, from 4:30-5:30 p.m. at the Morris Hospital YMCA, 2200 W. Dupont Ave., Morris.

The program is open to the community and does not require YMCA membership to attend.

Keeping up with active kids starts with the right fuel. During the program,

parents will learn how to support their child's energy, growth and performance through nutritious eating, with discussion focused on balanced meals, smart snacks, and hydration tips.

To register call Morris Hospital's Wellness department at 815-705-7358 or go to www.morrishospital.org/events and select the Nutrition category.

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Morris Hospital offers babysitter's training course

Morris Hospital is offering a Babysitter's Training Course for youths age 11 and older on July 10 or August 6 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the training classroom at Shabbona School, 725 School St., Morris.

The class is a great opportunity for those interested in acquiring the information and education needed for a safe babysitting experience including interviewing for a babysitting job, choosing safe and age-appropriate toys and games, performing first aid, practicing diapering

and feeding techniques, and handling bedtime issues. Participants should bring their own lunch and an afternoon snack.

Those who complete the course will earn certification in American Red Cross Babysitter's Training and American Heart Association Infant and Child CPR.

The class fee is \$60, and the class size is limited to 10 students. Registration can be completed online at www.morrishospital.org/events. Select the Kids Classes category.

Bird viewing at Lake Renwick

The Forest Preserve District of Will County is hosting Lake Renwick Migratory Bird Viewing on Saturdays through Aug. 9 from 8 a.m. to noon, at Lake Renwick Heron Rookery Nature Preserve, Plainfield.

View nesting herons, egrets, cormorants and bald eagles from the viewing platform while staff and volunteers answer questions. All ages; free.

Next Concert in the Park July 9

The Wilmington Park District's next Concert in the Park will be July 9 – Don't Matter to Me band with food served by Bennett Curtis Catering and a wiffleball tournament.

All Concert in the Park events are scheduled from 5 to 8 p.m. at North Island Park and are free to attend thanks to the support of local sponsors and community partners.

Future dates include" Aug. 13 – St. Jupiter along with a home run derby at the North Island ballfield and the Route 66 Mobile Diner.

Sept. 10 – The Clients with a Touch-a-Truck display for families and children.

Bring lawn chairs or blankets and enjoy an evening of music and community fellowship.

A fun adventure on Route 66

The Route 66 Association of Illinois is offering half-day car cruise events once a month at no charge. It is their way to help celebrate the 100th birthday of the famous Mother Road.

Here is your chance to experience special places on historic Route 66 that the whole family will enjoy. This tour is about 60 miles long.

The July 11th

cruise will start just south of Springfield. The tours are limited in size and must be reserved. This is an outstanding free opportunity.

Call Route 66 board member Misty LeBlanc at (618) 504-9095 for complete information and to sign up. Every kind of vehicle is welcome.

This tour goes rain or shine

Class of '61 to have reunion

What can we say? We like each other. Originally we thought it would be appropriate to call it quits after our last reunion.

But a few of us kept getting together anyway. So it's again an annual event at the Glenney house on Joliet Street, right next to the school where we wore our caps and gowns.

Classmates will be at 622 S. Joliet St., Wilmington, on Saturday, Sept. 12 at 11 a.m. Casual.

We're inviting anyone who knew us in school to join us. Everyone brings a smile and a dish to share. Any questions, call (414) 719-1121.

Bus trip to see a White Sox game

Come and be part of the White Sox winning season! The deadline is fast approaching to sign up for a fun-filled bus trip to see the Chicago White Sox take on the Cincinnati Reds on Thursday, Aug. 13 with the Wilmington Public Library for only \$20!

This outing is open to teens ages 13 and up with a parent or guardian, as well as adult participants.

Fans will meet at the library at 10:45 a.m. and travel together by school bus to the ballpark for the 1:10 p.m. game. After

cheering on the White Sox, we will head back and expect to return to the library around 6 p.m.

Tickets are just \$20 per person for school bus transportation and entry into the game. Space is limited to 40 participants, so be sure to sign up early to reserve your spot.

Sign up in person at the library by July 6 to be a part of this great opportunity to enjoy a summer day at the ballpark with friends and family.



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Withholding endorsements could be seriously counter-productive for AFL-CIO

The news earlier this month that the Illinois AFL-CIO has “deferred” all decisions on legislative and statewide endorsements in the upcoming fall election generated quite a bit of headlines.



Rich Miller

“Springfield not only failed to advance key priorities, but the process by which legislation was considered fell short of what working people deserve,” a statement by the state federation claimed. “These concerns span the full breadth of our movement, with public sector, private sector, manufacturing and building trades all expressing dissatisfaction.”

The key priorities they pointed to included a multi-billion dollar fix to the Tier Two pension system, which the state could not possibly fund without

a significant tax increase. The unions also wanted House Bill 2565, which would pay unemployment insurance benefits to striking workers after two weeks (expected

costs are up to \$1 million a year, but business interests were hotly opposed and, traditionally, no unemployment insurance changes can move forward without first being subjected to the agreed bill process – a tradition the AFL-CIO is trying to end).

House Bill 4416 would grant unemployment insurance benefits to non-instructional education workers (cost estimated up to \$176 million per year and local schools were hotly opposed because they’d have to raise property taxes).

And then there was the data center issue. Despite data centers being more unpopular than Ebola throughout the entire country (and the world, for that matter), enough House and Senate Democrats privately stood with organized labor against data center regulations deemed unreasonable by the industry that a bill which clamped down on them and would’ve been wildly popular never emerged. Heck, nobody ever got to the negotiation stage.

What upset some of the unions was that Gov. JB Pritzker decided to do what everybody has figured he’d do all along: He issued a decree pausing the granting of data center tax breaks until a legislative solution could be worked out.

That action will likely force the industry and the construction unions to the negotiating table. Even if a lawsuit is filed and won claiming that Pritzker

overstepped his authority, the governor’s bureaucracy can still slow-walk applications – and everyone involved knows this.

To my eyes, this whole thing looks like member management. People don’t always realize that labor leaders are subject to similar election pressures as politicians. They have to keep their constituents happy, and in this case the constituency is the Illinois AFL-CIO’s executive committee.

I just do not think that this announcement about how the union endorsement decisions will be “deferred” to a later date will wind up meaning no endorsements at all, for several reasons:

1) While things can change, this year is shaping up to be a horrible midterm for President Donald Trump in Illinois. The House and Senate Democrats are in no danger of losing seats (even Democratic Rep. Harry Benton, who has been

kicked out of the House Democratic Caucus over unspecified allegations, might actually pull this off, depending, of course, how horrible his oppo file is).

The Dems might even win seats without spending a dime. Withholding endorsements only to see the Democrats go on to have a good year would be seriously counter-productive. The politics game is partially about making sure candidates believe they need you.

2) Organized labor has not been all that ecstatic about Gov. Pritzker.

“He is labor friendly but not a friend to labor,” is a common refrain. So, they’re hoping to use this threat of deferred endorsements to put a bit of fear into him as he gears up to run nationwide.

But data centers are so absolutely unpopular with the electorate that Pritzker can point to his pro-labor record and explain that he just couldn’t be with his

friends on this one.

As far as pensions go, he can point to Illinois’ ignoble past of over-promising and under-funding pension benefits as a darned good reason to avoid repeating those mistakes.

When my associate Isabel Miller asked the governor about the announcement, Pritzker said the process was up to the AFL-CIO, adding that he considers himself “pro-worker.” Neither of the two Democratic legislative leaders responded to requests for comment.

3) As noted above, several legislators stood with labor on data center regulation in private, and if unions did actually withhold their endorsements for the fall election, those folks would have no incentive to stick with unions in the future, at least on this topic.

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

Stay alert as peak roadside mowing begins

With peak roadside mowing season underway, the Illinois Department of Transportation is reminding the public to slow down, proceed with caution and pay extra attention when encountering equipment and personnel.

In keeping with the recent practice of timing operations to preserve and promote pollinator habitat, the heaviest mowing period will be now until Aug. 15.

“You’ll see our mowing crews throughout the entire state so please remember to give them room to do their jobs safely,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Gia Biagi. “Our top priorities are protect-

ing our workers, the public and the environment.”

During the summer, IDOT conducts two primary types of mowing. Safety mowing occurs directly adjacent to the road as needed. Maintenance mowing, which lasts for approximately six weeks and starts around July 1, includes areas next to culverts, ditches, traffic control devices and other structures, while following the Illinois Monarch Project Mowing Guidelines for Pollinators, protecting as much habitat and nectar resources as possible.

The mowing schedule helps to minimize the impact on the traveling public and encourage pol-

linator activity, which assists in the reproduction of flowers, fruits and vegetables that are essential to the state’s ecosystem and agricultural economy. Reducing the amount of land maintained and growing pollinator habitat also protects the endangered rusty patched bumble bee and the monarch butterfly, the official state insect of Illinois.

In 2020, IDOT joined in the launch of the Illinois Monarch Action Plan, a collaborative effort with local and state partners to help ensure the survival and successful migration of monarchs by increasing and protecting habitat along roadways



Photo courtesy IDOT

PEAK MOWING SEASON is underway in Illinois and motorists are advised to be on the lookout for tractors like this.



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Special thanks to our Coaler DRIVE volunteers,
local first responders, and all community members
who attended and made this salute memorable.

Now's the time to get ahead of higher taxes

Now's the time to turn tax planning into a year-round strategy to secure your wealth at all stages of life.

The Illinois CPA Society (ICPAS) suggests taxpayers take these four steps:

A smart money move to start with is revisiting one's tax returns. Was a notably larger refund received, or was an unfortunate tax bill due? Was there a significant difference from prior years? If so, why? Ideally, taxpayers should see little to no refund or balance due come Tax Day, so if that wasn't the case, adjustments should be made.

How a taxpayer earns income and saves it throughout the year impacts their taxes. Even small adjustments to one's W-

4 payroll withholdings or tax-deferred retirement account contributions and adjusting whenever a life event occurs (think changes in employment, marital status, children or dependents, inheritance or investment income, etc.) could be enough to hit that goal of little to no refund or balance due on Tax Day.

Depending on how much income tax was refunded or due on Tax Day, and why, will inform a taxpayer of what they can do throughout the year to strategically mitigate or better manage their tax burden.

Due to the unpredictable nature of future tax rates, taxpayers should maintain their savings and investments in a mix of taxable, tax-deferred, and tax-exempt

accounts.

Doing so diversifies current and future tax exposure and creates more opportunities for strategic tax planning as one's financial needs change throughout life.

Seek guidance: Most Americans only speak to advisors "when something forces the conversation." Instead of waiting for a complex tax or other financial situation to arise, taxpayers should think of proactive tax and financial planning as a means to financial flexibility and freedom.

Every dollar counts, and having trusted tax and financial planning professionals to turn to are helpful when it comes to decoding the outcome of tax season, miti-

gating one's tax exposure, and making the most of one's income and savings.

Whenever taxpayers have questions or concerns about their tax and financial situations, CPAs—certified public accountants can offer clarity. Working with a CPA isn't just about filing an annual tax return, it's about building a proactive tax strategy and financial plan that works throughout the year.

ICPAS' free "Find a CPA" directory can help taxpayers connect with a trusted, strategic advisor that's right for them based on location, types of services needed, and languages spoken. Find a CPA at www.icpas.org/findacpa.

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

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



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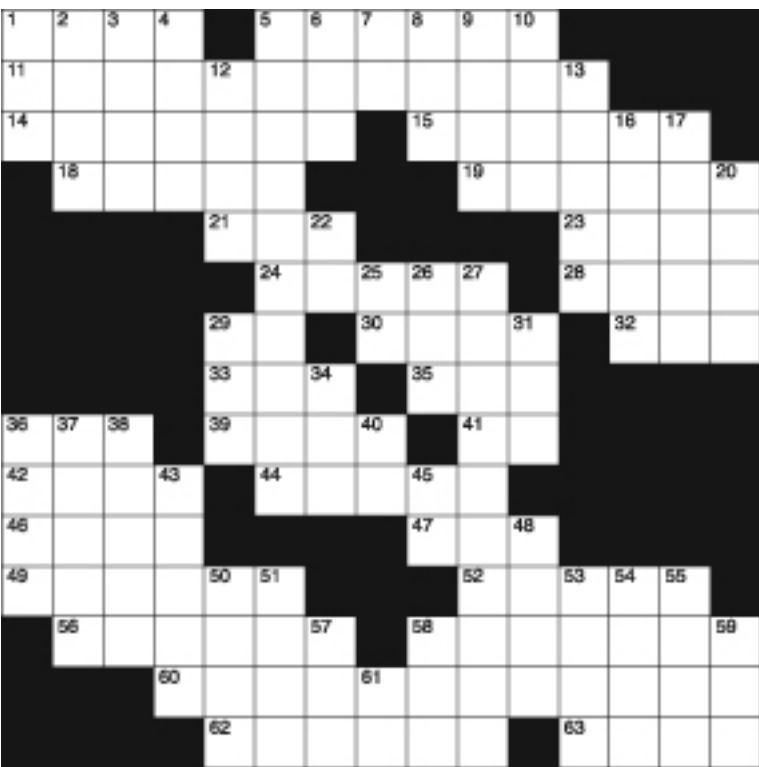
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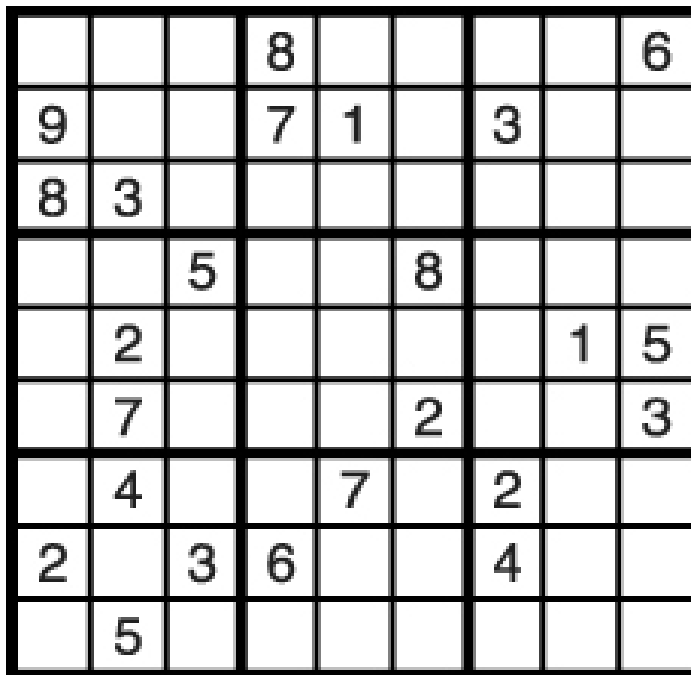


CLUES ACROSS

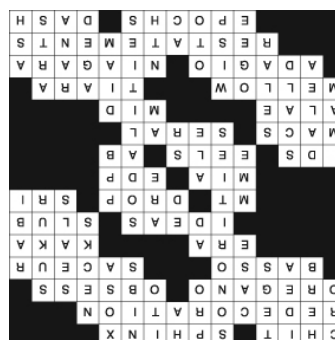
1. ___ chat
5. Statue near the Pyramids
11. A process to change the look
14. Herb
15. Think about excessively
18. Bass vocal part
19. Supreme Allied Cmdr. of NATO
21. A major division of geological time
23. New Zealand parrot
24. Cognitive contents
28. Lump of yarn
29. Atomic #109

CLUES DOWN

30. Let go of
32. Indian title of respect
33. Whereabouts unknown
35. Electronic data processing
36. Drivers' licenses count
39. Snake-like fishes
41. They precede C
42. Popular personal computers
44. Intermediate community stage in ecological succession
46. Wings
47. Indicates position
49. Pleasantly smooth or soft
52. Jeweled headdress
56. In slow tempo
58. ___ Falls
60. Reassertions
62. Eras
63. Hyphen



Level: Intermediate



WILDCAT SPORTS

Review of boys track season that included several new records

The WHS boys track and field started practice in early February in preparation for the indoor track season. Little did they know that that practice would eventually be the start of one of the most monumental boys track and field seasons in school history.

Coaching the Cats this year was head coach Stephanie Stickel and assistant coach Colt Monroe. Volunteer coaches were Scott Cupples, Nate Strong, and Todd Lockwood.

Captains of the team were seniors Billy Moore, Nate Cupples, Dom Guzier, and junior Cam Allen. This year's team was made up of six seniors, three juniors, nine sophomores and four freshmen.

Highlight of the indoor season was setting 24 personal records (PRs) in the two indoor meets of the season. Sophomore Hunter Kaitschuck participated in the Top Times indoor meet and placed 4th in the 60 meter high hurdles.

Team highlights of the outdoor season were finishing 9th in the 16-team Seneca Invitational, 4th out of 13 teams in the Tony Thorsen Dwight Invitational, placing 4th out of eight teams at the Herscher Invitational, and

3rd in the ICE conference meet.

This was the highest place by a boys team in conference since the 1969 team won the old Northeast Conference title.

All-Conference honors were awarded to Billy Moore in the 200 meter dash and the long jump, junior Jimmy Lewsader in the 400 meter dash, Hunter Kaitschuck in the 110 meter high hurdles and the 300 hurdles, and the 4X400 meter relay with junior Fynn Bryant, sophomore Cole Boersma, Nate Cupples, and Jimmy Lewsader.

On April 28, the Cats celebrated Senior Night and honored Cupples, Terrell Garner, Dom Guzier, Ed Kurze, Moore and Aiden Poulos.

At the IHSA sectional meet in Seneca, Moore qualified for state by winning the 200 meter dash and finishing 3rd in the 100 meter dash. Kaitschuck won the 110 hurdles and advanced to state. Both the 4X100 meter relay and the 4X400 meter relay teams qualified for state.

Team members in the 4X100 relay were Bryant, Cupples, Lewsader and Moore. The 4X400 members were Bryant, Cupples Boersma and Lewsader. The Cats finished 4th in this 18 team event, their best team finish in

recent school history.

The Cats sent a record five events to the state meet for the first time ever.

For the year, the boys set 140 outdoor personal records on the year and broke four school records. Moore beat the 26-year-old 400 meter dash.

At state, three new school records were set. Moore broke a 54- year-old record in the 200 meter dash at state. The 4X100 meter relay of Bryant, Cupples, Lewsader, and Moore broke their own school record at state. The last new school record was set by Kaitschuck, who broke the 110 meter high hurdles record on his way to his 2nd place finish at state and becoming the first boy to earn a state medal since 1997.

The future looks bright for this young track team, as 16 boys return next year. Joining Lewsader, Bryant, Kaitschuck and Boersma will be returning junior Cam Allen, sophomores Liam Anderson, Evan Cravens, Jaso Guzier, Logan Hill, Noah Morris, Steven Ortiz, Zander Van Duyn, and freshmen Jax Friddle, Stephen Kinnett, Julian Lowery and Colby Wengelewski. The nucleus is set. Congratulations on a terrific season, boys.



Photo by Eric Fisher

WHS TRACK SENIOR Nate Cupples is escorted by his parents, Scott and Miranda Cupples, and mom Dawn Boyle. Nate has participated in Track, Football and Iron Cats. After graduation Nate plans to attend JJC and be in the OET Program.



Photo by Eric Fisher

WHS TRACK SENIOR Terrell Garner is escorted by his mom, Carrie Tompkins, and his sister, Payton Garner. Terrell has been involved in Track and Wrestling. After graduation Terrell plans to attend the Transition Program at WHS.



Photo by Eric Fisher

WHS TRACK SENIOR Edward Kurze is escorted by his mom, Amanda Kurze. Edward has been a member of the Track team and the Power Lifting Team. After graduation Edward would like to get rich, stay rich and live forever.



Photo by Eric Fisher

WHS TRACK SENIOR Billy Moore is escorted by his parents, Bill and Angelica Moore. Billy has participated in Football and Track. After graduation Billy plans to attend Augustana College, where he will major in Kinesiology and play football.



WHS TRACK SENIOR Aiden Poulos is escorted by the WHS Hall of Fame Coach, Todd Lockwood. Aiden has been involved in Track, Cross Country, Tri M, Band, Choir, Showcats, Musicals, Plays, FCA, Fortitude, the Math team and he is the Stat Guy for the Girls Soccer team. After graduation Aiden plans to go straight into the workforce.



WHS TRACK SENIOR Dominic Guzier is escorted by his parents, TJ Guzier and Amy Reyes. Dominic has been in Track and Football. After graduation Dominic plans to go to work as a welder or fabricator.

Free Summer garden series at the library

The Wilmington Public Library is offering gardening presentation series featuring Nancy Kuhajda, master gardener, naturalist, and composter.

A second presentation, Mid-Summer Gardening Tips and Tricks, will be held on July 15 at 6 p.m.

The series concludes on August 5 at 6 p.m. with Preparing the Garden for Fall and Composting.

Whether you are an experienced gardener or just getting started, these informative and engaging programs are designed to help gardeners make the most of the growing season.

All programs are free and open to the public. Registration is encouraged. To register or learn more, call 815-476-2834. The library is located at 201 S. Kankakee St.

See a movie to support Kuzma

During Catfish days come to the Mar Theatre, 121 S. Main St., Wilmington, on Saturday, July 25 and see "Wild Hogs" starring Tim Allen and John Travolta highlighting a trip on the Mother Road, Route 66.

Admission is a donation of a food item for Kuzma Care Cottage. Doors open at 2:30 p.m. and the movie starts at 3 p.m.

Learn about beekeeping during July 8 free program

Join the Wilmington Public Library on Wednesday, July 8, at 6 p.m. for a fascinating program with members of the Will County Beekeepers Association, Dade Bradley and Anthony Merkel.

This engaging presentation will introduce attendees to the world of beekeeping and the important role bees play as pollinators in our environment.

Perfectly tying into our Summer Reading theme, Plant a Seed, Read, this program highlights how bees help plants grow, produce food and keep ecosystems thriving.

Guests will have the chance to see bees up close through a live observation hive and explore real beekeeping equipment. This hands-on experience offers a rare glimpse into the life of a beekeeper and the fascinating structure of a working hive. Families are welcome.

Wilmington museum open Saturdays

The Wilmington Area Historical Society will open its museum for visits from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays through the end of July. The exception will be July 4th, a national holiday.

Everyone is welcome to come see items of local significance on display at 114 N. Main St., Wilmington.