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## Catfish Days Grand Marshals Dairy farm connected them with community

BY ERIC FISHER  
PUBLISH

Few families are as qualified as the Hazzards to serve as Grand Marshals of the "Down on the Farm" Catfish Days parade.

For 30 years the Hazzard Dairy provided the community with wholesome milk and dairy products where Wilmington Middle School stands today. Former Hazzard farmland has been turned into city subdivisions and school grounds. And early ancestors even served in city government. Hazzard kin has been living in Wilmington for nearly 170 years.

Still, John and brother Jim and his wife Karen are humbled for being selected grand marshals.

"It's an awesome honor and we are proud to represent all the farmers that work so hard growing food," Karen said. "We are thankful to the community and the many friendships we have made. It's been a great place to raise our family."

Little remains of the original farmstead except imprinted Hazzard Dairy bottles; a 1944 receipt book and a notice listing new prices for milk, cream, cottage cheese and chocolate milk by the quart that Karen found on the back of a family recipe.

According to Karen, James Monroe Hazzard Sr., came to Wilmington from New York in 1853. He and his wife Annie Bradford Hazzard had five children.



Courtesy photo

THE HAZZARD FAMILY, including brothers Jim (left) and John, are the grand marshals for the 2023 Catfish Days parade. With the theme of Down on the Farm, Hazzard's Dairy Farm served the community 30 years where the Wilmington Middle School is located now. Jim and John, farmed as many as 1,300 acres east of town before retiring. They stand next to their 1970 John Deere 4020 which will be driven during the Catfish Days parade at 1 p.m. Sunday along Water Street.

Karen's husband's grandfather, James Monroe Hazzard Jr., was born in Wilmington in 1879. He was married to Mae, and had one son, Francis.

James Jr. was a dairy farmer, veterinarian, and a city official. He served three two-year terms as mayor (1921 to 1927), at which time the main streets of the city were paved and a modern street light system was installed.

He was a dairyman for over 30 years. In 1929, his herd won first prize in a milk and butterfat production contest held between 1,003 herds statewide. He was known throughout Illinois for his pure-blood dairy cows.

James Jr. died after a long illness at the family home in 1937. He was 57.

The Hazzard dairy farm was located in the 700 block of South Kankakee Street. It was sold in the early 1940s to the Wilkins family, and part of it was later sold to the school district for the construction of a high school (now the middle school). The only structure from the dairy operation that remains is a little block building just north of the school campus exit drive to Kankakee Street.

The pasture was what is now Hazzard's Subdivision, set between Joliet Street and Luther Drive, from Ridge Street to Kahler Road. Within that area is Mae Street, named after James Jr.'s wife.

After selling the dairy, Francis (Jim) (Karen)

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## Kicking off Catfish Days with a splash!



Photo by Eric Fisher

CUP IN HAND but beer is not. Troy Thorghesen of Grand Dental's "Rinse & Spit" team catches the ball Saturday during the Cup In Hand kickball tournament on the South Island Park. Three adult teams competed for the coveted Red Cup trophy with the team "Sit on My Base" winning the overall title. The annual tournament kicked off Catfish Days week with lots of fun for player and spectators. Thorghesen kept just enough fluid in his cup, a judge ruled, to get the out for Grand Dental.

## WPD on the lookout for summer speedsters

BY MARNEY SIMON  
EDITOR

It goes without saying that one should always obey the speed limit. But for those drivers who prefer to put the pedal to the metal, the Wilmington Police Department is keeping an extra eye out on you this month.

On July 11, WPD Chief Adam Zink told the members of the Committee of the Whole that the department is upping patrols through the end of the month, specifically for traffic and speed enforcement.

"We're in the middle of a speed grant right now, tell your friends to slow down in town because we're writing a lot of

tickets," Zink said. "Every year, IDOT provides some money across the state to enforce certain things at certain times. Right now in July, it happens to be speed. So, we applied for the grant a few months and they awarded us a certain number of dollars to spend from July 6 to July 31."

The funding is part of IDOT's Safety Grant program.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration provides those grant funds to the State of Illinois for highway safety programs, in an effort to address national priorities for reducing highway deaths and injuries through efforts such as

SEE WPD, PAGE 2

## City works on development of comprehensive, parks plans

BY MARNEY SIMON  
EDITOR

The city of Wilmington is looking to create a new comprehensive plan.

But first, the price needs to be right.

On July 11, city administrator Jeannine Smith gave an update to the Committee of the Whole on the effort to customize and develop that plan. The city's planning and zoning board first began discussions on updating the plan back in January 2022.

The city's current comprehensive plan was last updated and approved by the City Council in 2008. A com-

prehensive plan is designed to serve as a guiding document for policy decisions when it comes to development planning, including land use, transportation, and design.

The 2008 plan included 16 outlined goals and objectives, much of which centered around increasing residential and business growth and updating infrastructure while preserving the city's historic areas and small town charm.

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