

Storm topples trees, not community spirit

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

Four days after a powerful derecho and EF1 tornado tore through Wilmington, the sound of chainsaws filled Oakwood Cemetery Saturday.

This time, however, the sound signaled recovery.

Scores of volunteers descended on the cemetery armed with chainsaws, tractors, skid steers and plenty of muscle to tackle what cemetery officials initially feared would be weeks — if not months — of cleanup.

Eight hours later, the transformation was remarkable.

“Oh my goodness gracious. It was unbelievable,” said George Roesel, secretary/treasurer of Oakwood Cemetery. “I thought this was going to take us months to clean up. It only took us eight hours.”

The massive cleanup followed the Aug. 11 derecho that swept across the Midwest and Ohio River Valley, producing widespread straight-line winds of 70 mph to locally more than 100 mph across northeastern Illinois and northwestern Indiana, according to the National Weather Service.

The National Weather Service also confirmed six



toppled and damaged grave markers.

One of the largest, the Whitten monument, was knocked over and landed in the dirt. Roesel estimates the fallen section could weigh as much as 12,000 pounds and will require a crane to properly lift and reset.

Another grave marker was struck with enough force to crack it in half.

Roesel said the damage was especially difficult to see because he had recently visited with the woman whose family stone was broken.

“The tree came down and hit her stone so hard it cracked it right down the middle,” he said. “She visits the stone often, maintaining it like no other. I felt bad that when I called her I could only leave a message.”

Other stones suffered varying degrees of damage, some of which will require professional repairs beyond what volunteers could accomplish.

But the immediate task was clearing an enormous amount of downed timber and debris and getting the cemetery back in order.

That is where the community stepped in.

Oakwood Cemetery is a nonprofit organization, and its board members

MANY HANDS MAKE light work was proven on Saturday when nearly 100 volunteers pitched in to clean up storm damage at Oakwood Cemtery in Wilmington. Merry Jo Montgomery (center) was among them who carried downed branches to be hauled away.

tornadoes from the event in its Chicago forecast area, including an EF1 tornado in Wilmington.

Oakwood Cemetery was among the areas hit

hard by the storm, which toppled an estimated 40 mature trees, many of them majestic oaks, sycamores and cottonwoods that had shaded

gravesites for generations.

Roesel said three enormous trees went down in the newer portion of the cemetery across from the Baptist church, while close

to 30 were counted in the older section atop the hill. Other damaged and fallen trees brought the estimated total to around 40.

The storm's force also

Photo by Eric Fisher

SEE OAKWOOD CEMETERY PAGE 2

Tornado-spawning storms leave a trail of destruction

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

What began as a powerful line of thunderstorms in the morning hours of Tuesday, Aug. 11, almost immediately evolved into one of the most destructive weather events to strike the area in years, leaving damaged homes, downed trees,



overturned vehicles, and thousands without power across Will and Grundy counties.

Wilmington's wide swath of damage

Surveying the destruction from Tuesday's storm, Wilmington Mayor Ben Dietz declared a state of emergency.

“We know many of our

residents are still dealing with the aftermath...” Dietz said on Aug. 13, “We want you to know that the City is working every day to help our community recover.”

The hardest hit community was Wilmington, where National Weather Service investigators confirmed an EF-1 tornado touched down at approxi-

mately 10:40 a.m. near West Baltimore Street and North 1st Street.

The twister packed winds of up to 90 mph and remained on the ground for about 1.5 miles, leaving a swath of destruction, before crossing the Kankakee River.

The tornado tore a large section of roof from Tire Tracks, an automotive repair shop at 507 W. Baltimore St., sending debris into a nearby strip mall.

The tornado then crossed the Kankakee River and subsequently tracked across the South Island Park before hitting the Oakwood Cemetery, where it virtually uprooted trees, causing widespread damage. The tornado continued east on Ridge Street before finally lifting near the Forked Creek Preserve.

The funnel cloud grazed the ground for 1.5 miles, nearly two minutes and 150 yards wide, leaving a trail of damage. South Water Street (Highway 102) was closed for two days due to a massive tree that had fallen on power lines. South Main Street was also blocked by a tree.

Traffic on Highway 53 was rerouted onto Strip Mine Road due to leaning power poles south to Coal



Photo by Eric Fisher

DAM FENCE—A section of the metal fence preventing access to the Kankakee River dam was twisted off its posts on Tuesday when Derecho winds of up to 100 mph did extensive damage to the South Island park.



Photo by Eric Fisher

OAKWOOD CEMETERY has been blessed with mostly towering oak trees, adding beauty and solitude among the grave stones for a couple of centuries. But several were destroyed on Aug. 11 when a possible EF1 tornado tore through around 11 a.m.

Photo by Eric Fisher

SEE STORM PAGE 2



STOP BY & SHOP OUR TOP DEALS!

SALE VALID 8/20-8/26/26

Coal City, Braidwood & Wilmington

CHECK OUT OUR WEEKLY AD @BERKOTFOODS.COM



99¢ LB

GREAT GRILLING!

Berkot's Farm Fresh Premium Bone-In Chicken Thighs



10/\$10

Creamette Pasta 12-16 Oz.



2/\$4

Prego Pasta Sauce 23-24 oz, Alfredo or Cheese Sauce 14.5 oz



LOCAL Michigan Peaches

DIGITAL COUPON

\$1.99 LB

LIMIT 10 LBS

LIMIT 1 OFFER*

Price without coupon: \$2.99/lb

The rise and fall of the Commercial Bank

Time was when a bank was a physical thing that you could touch. Whether it was in the shape of a pig or a huge imposing building, they contained money that you could actually touch. Today banking with an app on your device we call a phone, we can handle money without touching anything but a keypad. Today we look at banks and banking as it was “in the day.”



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

The first mayor of Wilmington, John Daniels, founded and headed a bank in the Exchange Hotel building, formerly on the north-east corner of Water and Baltimore, in 1855. Due to greed and thievery the bank went bust in 1873 taking with it over \$250 (\$6,639,000) of the towns' money. Yet another bank was the First National Bank of Wilmington in 1862. Located on the south-east corner of Water and Baltimore, it was founded by the earliest pioneers of Wilmington, the McIntyre and Stewart family. It was an imposing building with a few pillars in front. However, it was built before the day of semi-

trucks attempting turns at that corner. After being run into several times, the building finally gave up and was demolished. The Commercial Bank of Wilmington started out as the Miners' National Bank of Braidwood. In February of 1878 we read, “It is said that the Miners' National Bank of Braidwood is about to be removed to the Empire block in this city. We believe an act changing its name and location was before Congress on last Saturday.”

Founded by E. W. Felton, an early Braidwood pioneer, the Miners' Bank had weathered the terrible miners' strike of 1877. It was a time of great economic hardship and very little banking. Wilmington had a more stable economy and was not so far away that the loyal customers could not find it if they wanted to.

By March Felton had moved the bank to the Empire block of buildings and changed the name to the Commercial National Bank. The main entrance was on Jackson Street, but there was also an entrance from the rear of H. H.

Wise's dry goods store that occupied the corner of the building and had its main entrance on Water Street. Although the Commercial Bank rarely made headlines it was a sure and steady enterprise. Felton was a very conservative man and spent as little as he could on the interior of the bank, preferring instead to make more lucrative investments.

When Felton died in December of 1904, his obituary described him this way, “For a number of years he was engaged in the grain business with Mr. W. H. Odell and was generally regarded as a good, honest, upright businessman. He had a large heart and no deserving person in need was ever turned away without receiving some assistance from him.” After Felton's death W. H. Odell took over running the bank, but just three years later he also died. Mayor Kahler was elected Cashier, (in 1907 a Cashier in a bank was like a vice-president is today) and H. N. Roberts took over as President.

These two men had a vested interest in seeing Wilmington grow. The first thing they did was expand and remodel the now out of date bank. We read in May of 1907 “Work on the E. Donahoe building (the old H. H. Wise store) is



A PHOTO OF the building near Harborside Marina, now a restaurant. It was built by the Department of Conservation.

being pushed most energetically. A modern new front for plate glass windows has been put in and there will be a large plate glass window on the south side on Jackson Street. When finished this will be the Commercial National Bank's new home.”

Work went along quickly. On July 19, 1907 we read in the Wilmington Advocate, “The large safe, especially made for the Commercial National Bank of this city by the Victor Safe and Lock Co., of Cincinnati, O., arrived here Wednesday last and was on Thursday forenoon

placed in the Commercial National Bank's new home, corner of Water and Jackson streets, by the Hurst house movers of Braidwood. The safe is a beauty and its weight is five tons and a half.”

On August 25, 1907 the grand opening was announced, “The Commercial National Bank was on Thursday evening moved from the rear of the former H. H. Wise store, corner Water and Jackson Streets, to its beautiful and charming new home in the front room especially set off and fitted up in said building for this banking

firm. The bank, which is one of the finest in the county, was opened to the public this (Friday) morning with new fixtures, furniture and an immense new safe.”

Unfortunately, the Commercial Bank could not out last the Great Depression in the 1930's and was forced to close its doors. But one door remains open. The door to the five-and-a-half-ton vault can be opened for you the next time you visit the Corner Tap for a cold one.

Four city council seats will be up for re-election

Any City of Wilmington resident interested in serving on the city council or as city clerk can take out petitions for the April 6, 2027 Consolidated Election starting Aug. 25.

Four city alderpersons, each representing different wards, will be up a four-year term. Voters will also decide a City Clerk for a two-year term.

The council seats up for election are presently held by Alderpersons Kevin Kirwin (1st ward), Dennis Vice (2nd), Rachel Conforti (3rd) and Todd Holmes (4th).

Information and petition forms will be available at city hall, 1165 S. Water St., Wilmington beginning on Aug. 25. The same forms and additional information

are available in the 2027 Candidate's Guide, which can be found on the Illinois State Board of Elections website.

Signed, completed forms are to be submitted to the City Clerk's Office during the statutory filing period of Nov. 16 through Nov. 23.

Candidates are encouraged to review the 2027 Candidate's Guide on the Illinois State Board of Elections website and seek legal advice on their eligibility for office and the proper procedures for circulating, completing and filing their petitions.

The City Clerk's Office is located at Wilmington City Hall, 1165 S. Water St. Regular office hours are 8:30 a.m. through 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For further information, contact Joie Ziller at City Hall at (779) 279-3228.

209U lunch menu

Mon., Aug. 24: mini ravioli, green beans, garlic toast, peach cup and choice of milk

Tues., Aug. 25: cold ham and cheese on bun, au gratin potatoes, orange sherbert and choice of milk

Wed., Aug. 26: hot dog on a bun, nacho and

cheese, baked beans, canteloupe and choice of milk

Thurs., Aug. 27: bbq rib on bun, cole slaw, pringles, apple slices and choice of milk

Fri., Aug. 28: cheese-burger on bun, tater tots, sidekick ice cup and choice of milk

Man sentenced to 27 years for sexually abusing 13-year-old girl

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

A Wilmington man who admitted transporting a 13-year-old Iowa girl to Illinois for sexual abuse has been sentenced to more than 27 years in federal prison.

Ryan Zelek, 33, was sentenced Wednesday by U.S. District Judge John Robert Blakey to 27 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to transportation of a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity. The court also ordered Zelek to pay \$54,298 in restitution.

According to federal prosecutors, Zelek began communicating with the girl through the social media application Snapchat during the summer of 2021. Authorities said Zelek knew the victim was 13 years old when he drove from Illinois to Iowa, picked her up outside a movie theater and transported her to his Wilmington residence, where he sexually assaulted her. He later drove the victim back to Iowa.

The investigation expanded after law enforcement officers obtained and executed a court-authorized search warrant for Zelek's electronic devices. Prosecutors said investigators discovered thousands of

images and videos depicting child sexual abuse material, including content involving very young children and acts described as sadistic.

The sentence was announced by Andrew S. Boutros, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and Ryan Whalen, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the FBI's Chicago Field Office.

The Wilmington Police Department and the FBI Field Office in Mobile, AL, assisted in the investigation.

In a sentencing memorandum filed with the court, Assistant U.S. Attorney Kristin M. Pinkston described the severity of the crimes.

“Ryan Zelek raped and brutalized a 13-year-old girl and recorded a video of it on his cell phone,” Pinkston wrote. “Defendant clearly foresaw the consequences of his actions, knew exactly how abhorrent his actions were, and yet abused the minor anyway.”

Federal authorities encourage anyone who believes they may be a victim of sexual exploitation to contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline at 1-800-843-5678 or online at CyberTipline.com. The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

WHS Fall sports schedules

VARSITY FOOTBALL

Aug. 21 ...host Bishop Mac	7 p.m.
Aug. 28 ...@Morrison H.S.....	7 p.m.
Sept. 4 ...@Peotone.....	7 p.m.
Sept. 11 ...host Herscher.....	7 p.m.
Sept. 18 ..@Manteno	7 p.m.
Sept. 25 ...host Lisle/ Homecoming.....	7 p.m.
Oct. 2.....@Streator.....	7 p.m.
Oct. 9.....host Reed-Custer	7 p.m.
Oct. 15.....@Coal City.....	7 p.m.

FRESHMEN FOOTBALL

Aug. 31 ...host Lincoln Way West	5:30 p.m.
Sept. 7 ...@Sandwich	10 a.m.
Sept. 14 ...host Herscher.....	5:30 p.m.
Oct. 12.....host Reed-Custer	5:30 p.m.
Oct. 19....@Coal City.....	5:30 p.m.

VARSITY VOLLEYBALL

Aug. 24 ...host Grant Park.....	6 p.m.
Aug. 25 ...@Evergreen Park	5:30 p.m.
Aug. 27 ...@GSW.....	6 p.m.
Aug. 29 ...host Wilmington Invite.....	8 a.m.
Sept. 1 ...@Peotone.....	7 p.m.
Sept. 3 ...host Herscher.....	6 p.m.
Sept. 8 ...@Manteno.....	6 p.m.
Sept. 9 ...host Beecher.....	6 p.m.
Sept. 10 ...host Lisle	6 p.m.
Sept. 17 ...@Streator	6 p.m.
Sept. 19 ...@Manteno Tournament	8 a.m.
Sept. 22 ...host RC Volley for cure	7 p.m.
Sept. 23 ...@Dwight	6 p.m.
Sept. 24 ...@Coal City.....	6 p.m.
Sept. 29 ...host Peotone.....	6 p.m.
Oct. 1.....@Herscher.....	6 p.m.
Oct. 5.....host Seneca.....	6 p.m.
Oct. 6.....host Manteno.....	6 p.m.
Oct. 8.....@Lisle.....	6 p.m.
Oct. 13.....host Streaor.....	6 p.m.
Oct. 15.....@Reed-Custer.....	6 p.m.
Oct. 17.....@Bradley Invite.....	8 a.m.
Oct. 20.....host Coal City.....	6 p.m.

FRESHMAN VOLLEYBALL

Aug. 25....@Evergreen Park.....	4:30 p.m.
Aug. 27.....@GSW.....	5 p.m.
Sept. 1....@Peotone.....	5 p.m.
Sept. 3.....host Herscher.....	5 p.m.

Sept. 5. ...@Bradley Bourbonnais.....	8:30 a.m.
Sept. 8.....@Manteno	5 p.m.
Sept. 10...host Lisle	5 p.m.
Sept. 17...@Streator	5 p.m.
Sept. 22 ..host RC Volley for a Cure.....	5 p.m.
Sept. 23...@Dwight	5 p.m.
Sept. 24 ...@Coal City	5 p.m.
Sept. 29...host Peotone	5 p.m.
Oct. 1.....@Herscher	5 p.m.
Oct. 5.....host Seneca	5 p.m.
Oct. 6.....host Manteno.....	5 p.m.
Oct. 8.....@Lisle.....	5 p.m.
Oct. 13.....host Streator.....	5 p.m.
Oct. 15.....@Reed-Custer.....	5 p.m.
Oct. 20.....host Coal City.....	5 p.m.

VARSITY GOLF

Aug. 18 ...@St. Bede-Spring Creek GC	9 a.m.
Aug. 20 ...@Manteno/Aspen Ridge	4 p.m.
Aug. 25 ...@Streator	4 p.m.
Aug. 26 ...@RC/w Grant P. /Silver Oaks.....	4:30 p.m.
Aug. 27 ...@Coal City/Cinder Ridge	4:15 p.m.
Sept. 1 ...@Chesterton Academy.....	4 p.m.
Sept. 8 ...VS Peotone/ Location TBA.....	4:30 p.m.
Sept. 10 ..VS Lisle/ Location TBA.....	3 p.m.
Sept. 15 ..VS Herscher/ Location TBA.....	4:30 p.m.
Sept. 21 ...@Conf. Tourn. Wolf Creek GC.....	10 a.m.
Sept.22 ...@Momence/Dwight	
.....@Dwight CC	4:15 p.m.
Sept. 23 ...@St Anne.....	4:15 p.m.
Sept. 24 ...@Dwight invite/Dwight CC	1 p.m.
Sept. 30 ...@IHSa Regional	9 a.m.

BOYS SOCCER

Aug. 26 ...host Streator.....	4:30 p.m.
Sept. 1 ...@Peotone.....	4:30 p.m.
Sept. 3 ...@Bradley Bourbonnais.....	6 p.m.
Sept. 8 ...@Manteno	TBA
Sept. 15...host Coal City.....	4:30 p.m.
Sept. 21 ...@Herscher	5 p.m.
Oct. 1.....host Reed-Custer	4:30 p.m.
Oct. 6.....@Coal City	6 p.m.

Questions about Medicare?



Let us be your resource!

Call our knowledgeable staff to discuss your healthcare choices.

OAK KNOLL
= Insurance + Tax =
STRATEGIES
INDEPENDENT AGENCIES

CRAIG LONG

Call: (815) 476-2105

craig@oakknollinsurance.com

www.oakknollfinancial.com

OAK KNOLL
= Financial =
STRATEGIES

Stephen Francis

CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™
steve.francis@raymondjames.com

Wesley E. Smith

CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™

Kara Mason

FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Laura J. Martin

FINANCIAL PARAPLANNER QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL

Securities offered through Raymond James Financial Services, Inc. Member FINRA/SIPC.
Investment advisory services are offered through Raymond James
Financial Services Advisors, Inc. Oak Knoll Financial Strategies is not a registered
broker dealer and is independent of Raymond James Financial Services.

205 South Water Street, Wilmington, IL 60481 • (815) 476-2105

Free Press Newspapers readers

SOUND-OFF

To voice your opinion 24 hours a day, go to
www.freepressnewspapers.com or call 815-634-0317

Sound-Off is a 24-hour phone line provided to give readers a chance to voice their opinions.
The Free Press Newspapers reserves the right to edit remarks for taste, length, personal attacks, racism, threatening, calls for boycotts and libel.
The comments stated are the opinions and ideas of the callers and not that of the newspaper.
Information may not constitute the actual events or facts of a particular topic.
Submissions by email to: courant@gmail.com with "soundoff" in the subject line or visit www.freepressnewspapers.com, or call 815-634-0317. Please state the town in which you are calling from or in regards to. Mail comments to Sound-Off, 271 S. Broadway, Coal City, IL 60416 or 111 S. Water St., Wilmington, IL 60481. There can be only one submission of 250 words or less per person during any given week.

Start paying attention

WILMINGTON— For those who live in denial, avoiding the daily unhinged events happening daily, who just "don't have time for that stuff, the everyone is does it crowd." Better start paying attention, this War thing is rapidly evolving into America is screwed for a full year or more without escalating this Distraction War with American boots on the ground. Even he isn't that stupid with midterms coming quickly and his poll numbers are atrocious at best. Independents moderate Republicans and Gen X are realizing he has showed his priorities, his senility and age and his old schtick is over. Better start thinking for yourself and your family. His last gasp is obviously "this election is rigged" bs coming from him and his cronies, as they micro-monitor every possible bs accusation every day. Just vote, strength in overwhelming numbers aren't lying.

Dumb vs smart states

SHADOW LAKES— I am reading in a magazine that the red states by contrast has the smallest increase in spending on education with Mississippi ranked number one in the nation with reading and math scores. So why is it people in Illinois and blue states put out under-achieving students while people in red states put out smart students. Can anyone answer me that? Dan Hill

Poor spoiled brat

BRACEVILLE— If Trump read the SoundOff we would no longer be able to have it. Everyone that writes in hurts his little feelings. The poor little spoiled brat.

You're a whimp

SHADOW LAKES— Watching Channel 5 News about how people can cope with stress over severe storms. It's very simple, you're a wimp. Grow up, accept it and believe in God. C'mon people. Sheri Michaels also needs to wake up. Thank you.

He is in those files

WILMINGTON—Donald J. Trump sues everyone, sues anything, sues for any reason. Reason being, you can drag it out

in court appealing and reappealing to a higher court taking sometimes years for a final outcome. Funny how thousands of people have called him a rapist and a pedophile. He won't dare sue them. Why? I know why, you know why, but I'm not afraid to say it. He is guilty of doing terrible things to innocent children repeatedly for years. He won't release those files, he is those files. Say a prayer for Trump's victims when you hypocritically go to church.

Conned again

WILMINGTON—Attention all you Trump lovers, the self-promoting World's Greatest Businessman just had the July 2026 budget results posted. In just July it has a deficit of \$432 billion, one month. America is broke and nothing to help it is coming. Can't thank you guys enough for being so foolish to be conned again. Fools use the nonsense words like communist, socialism, radical, Islam and immigrants to scare but the most frightening thing, is that Epstein pal monster currently running the destroyed White House.

Going to cut SS

WILMINGTON—Speaker of the House leader Mike Johnson is repeating his desire to cut Social Security by 20-22% across the board more and more often than ever before. If you collect \$1,000 per month new number as low as \$780. What would you do to live? Collect \$2,500 per month, new number \$1,950, what could you cut out of life at 70-years-old? This is what the Republican Party is openly saying on camera. They aren't BS'ing. They use new term entitlements instead of Social Security to fool you. Don't continue being stupid out of old habits, save yourself, help yourselves. Quit voting for a party that doesn't give a **** about your life. Enjoy whatever time you have left. Republican politicians are all about power, themselves and keeping billionaires happy for political donations.

Finally, we've been heard

BRAIDWOOD—For years, Braidwood citizens have asked for more events for our youth and families. It is wonderful to see that the city council has listened and is taking action. Thank you to everyone who volunteered to join the newly formed



Events Committee. The list of possible events sounds exciting, and I look forward to seeing these ideas become a reality. It is great to see our community coming together to create more fun and positive activities for our children and families. I can't wait to see what the Events Committee brings to Braidwood this year. Thank you to the council and all the volunteers for investing in our community and, most importantly, our youth.

Trump never served

The commander-in-chief of all U.S. military branches showed his concern for the welfare of sailors and Marines by saying that their nine uninterrupted months aboard the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln is "not nearly long enough." Coming from a man who never served his country and who has been branded as a five-time draft-dodger, I suppose that is to be expected. After all, he chastised the late John McCain, whose fighter jet was shot down over Hanoi, and for 5 1/2 years was a captive, beaten and tortured in a North Vietnamese prison. The man who thought that he knew Trump well, the late Lindsey Graham, once questioned Trump's fitness to be commander-in-chief saying that attending a military high school was no substitute for the military service that Trump avoided. "He doesn't represent my party and he doesn't represent the values that the men and women in uniform are fighting for." Trump didn't then and he obviously doesn't now.

David Kahn. Cashiers, NC

No more pork chops?

WILMINGTON—Think about this all the Muslims that are running for office are

all Democrats. No more hot dogs, no more pork chops, or bacon, no more freedom for females. Vote wisely, it's your kids and grandchildren's future.

Pizza burger, anyone?

Getting tired of all the people in SoundOff talking about politics. Can we talk about something else? How about a pizza burger?

Sue the robot surgeons

SHADOW LAKES—There was an article in the paper about robots performing surgery. There were some things that were missed. One was how do you sterilize a robot to prevent infections on patients? And what will happen if the hand of the robot shakes while cutting or if the robot cuts the wrong thing? People will sue the robot for and the hospital will say it's not their fault. You don't have to be a doctor to perform surgery, so why are they getting paid so much money? And what will happen to all the doctors in the future?

Mindless, spineless

WILMINGTON—I'm not worried about the Democratic Socialist Party. I am very worried about the mindless, spineless do-nothing Mega-Republicans who haven't passed one bill to help people with their health insurance and to help people who are barely making a living trying to survive raising a family.

JoAnn

Thanks for the veggies

BRACEVILLE—This is a little late but thanks to whoever put out a table full of vegetables on the south side of Braceville Road last year for the people who can't get out to do gardening any more.

Need printing?

We'll put our award-winning graphic arts department to work for you to typeset and print practically anything.

Sure you can order printing online but it's not always cheaper when you ad in those hidden art charges and shipping.
Get a local quote first!

Specializing in full color business cards

- business cards
- dinner tickets
- letterhead
- full color copies
- banners
- posters
- raffle tickets
- envelopes
- business forms
- fliers
- resumes
- yard signs and more

We'll take care of your printing needs from start to finish.



Stop in for a free competitive quote
111 S. Water St., Wilmington
Ph. 815-476-7966

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

SISTEK RENTALS

We **SELL, REPAIR,** and **RENT**
Outdoor Power Equipment



815-237-8298

740 Oak Street • South Wilmington, IL



Spray Foam Insulation

- garages
- pole buildings
- attics
- basements
- commercial
- industrial

Concrete Raising

- driveways
- sidewalks
- patios
- stairs
- and more!

Wilmington • 815-200-6880

Mini Storage

CLEMENTINE'S CLOSETS

515 Davy Lane,
Wilmington

Affordable
Clean, Secure
Monthly Rentals

No Deposit Required

815-530-0200

A & E SEPTIC SERVICE

Pumping - Repairs - New Installation
Sewer Rodding - Sanitary - Party Potties
Ed Bonnavier

Coal City • 634-4691

SHORKEY PAINTING

(815) 546-1321

Interior/Exterior



SHAKE, RATTLE AND FLASH — A powerful lightning strike lights up the night sky northeast of Wilmington along Peotone Road in this dramatic photo captured by Carrie Anderson around 10 p.m. Thursday. The bolt was one of many that rattled homes as a strong thunderstorm moved through the area, producing lightning strikes so loud and powerful they shook windows. The storm arrived just two days after the National Weather Service confirmed an EF1 tornado caused damage in Wilmington on Tuesday. While Thursday night's storm was not as threatening, Mother Nature still put on a loud—and brilliant—show.

IDOT approves Route 53 bridge for controversial NorthPoint expansion

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

A major hurdle for the controversial NorthPoint Development project has been cleared after the Illinois Department of Transportation approved construction of a bridge over Illinois Route 53 in the area of Breen Road in Joliet, paving the way for a significant expansion of the logistics and warehouse development in southern Will County.

The bridge will span Route 53 and connect portions of NorthPoint's sprawling property east and west of the highway. The structure is considered critical to the company's long-term plans to develop between 20 million and 30 million square feet of additional warehouse and logistics space on thousands of acres near Joliet and Elwood.

The approval allows NorthPoint to move forward with site work, including mass grading operations, following upcoming zoning proceedings.

NorthPoint will fund the estimated \$14 million project and will be responsible for its ongoing maintenance.

The bridge has been a central component of NorthPoint's vision for the property for years. The developer has argued that the crossing would keep truck traffic associated with the logistics park off Route 53, allowing vehicles to move between facilities without entering the state highway.

NorthPoint's plans have generated intense debate across Will County for nearly a decade. Residents, environmental advocates, and local officials opposed to the project have repeatedly raised concerns about increased truck traffic, air pollution, noise, road congestion and the loss of agricultural land.

The opposition move-

ment, often organized under the banner "Say No to NorthPoint," drew large crowds to public meetings throughout the approval process.

Portions of the development have already been constructed west of Route 53, where several large industrial buildings are in operation. The newly approved bridge is expected to unlock future development east of the highway and accelerate buildout of what could become one of the largest logistics parks in the Midwest.

Supporters of the project have long pointed to the potential for job creation and increased tax revenue, while critics maintain that the long-term impacts on transportation infrastructure and nearby communities remain unresolved.

With IDOT's approval now secured, attention is expected to shift to local zoning decisions and the next phase of construction planning.

Gas prices creeping ever-so-slightly higher

Average gasoline prices in Illinois have risen 7.5 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$4.28/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,378 stations in Illinois.

In Wilmington, gas prices range from \$3.88/g at Mohsen, up to \$4.09/g at Shell.

Braidwood's gas stations are at \$4.19/g, and Coal City is charging \$3.99/g across the board.

In Morris, expect to pay anywhere from \$3.89/g (cash) at BP, up to \$4.24/g at Amoco.

Finally, Bourbonnais Gulf is charging \$4.06/g up to \$4.59/g at Kroger.

"Average gasoline prices climbed back above \$4 per gallon over the last week, with prices rising in slightly more states than they fell, as rebounding oil prices driven by the continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz and ongoing Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries kept upward pressure on the market," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

"Diesel felt the pressure even more acutely, rising in all but a few states, as Ukraine's attacks on Russian refining infrastructure continue to impact refined product prices more than crude oil itself. While the seasonal transition to cheaper winter-blend gasoline in the coming month could bring some relief, the two dominant challenges facing motorists — the closed Strait and the ongoing refinery strikes — show no signs of resolving anytime soon. Until they do, the path for gas and diesel prices remains tilted to the upside."

The lowest price in the state Sunday was \$3.76/g while the highest was \$5.99/g, a difference of \$2.23/g.

Prices in Illinois are 12.8 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 89.7 cents per gallon higher than a year ago.

LIFE'S BETTER WHEN YOU BUNDLE.

You could save on home & auto when you also purchase life insurance from American Family Life Insurance Company.

Get your personalized quote today.



Gerald Gresham, Agent
1095 S. Water St., Unit C
Wilmington, IL 60481
teamgresham@amfam.com
(815) 476-6364



*Customers who bundle home, auto and life policies may save on their auto and/or home policies. Discounts may vary by state, property, policy form and company underwriting the auto and/or home policy. Discounts may not apply to all coverages on an auto or home policy. Discounts do not apply to life insurance policies. Products not available in every state.
American Family Mutual Insurance Company S.I. & its Operating Companies, American Family Life Insurance Company, 6000 American Parkway, Madison, WI 53783 60824 22535 - 04/24 - 24029512

WEESIP LIQUORS

Woodbridge Wine or Sutter Home Wine \$200 OFF 750ml \$300 OFF 1.5L	Hartley Brandy VSOP \$200 OFF 750ml \$300 OFF 1.75L
Green River Bourbon \$500 OFF 750ml	Malibu Rum \$300 OFF 750ml
Smirnoff Vodka \$200 OFF 750ml \$300 OFF 1.75L	Teremana Tequila \$500 OFF 750ml
	Good Boys All Flavors \$300 OFF 8 pk

LIL VEGAS 6 Machines Private Room
Must be 21 yrs or older. **COME TRY YOUR LUCK!**

Offers good through Sept. 2, 2026.
1099 S. Water St., Wilmington • 815-476-2764

SURF Internet.

SWITCH TO FIBER INTERNET THAT CAN KEEP UP



FIBER INTERNET PLANS STARTING AT

\$30 /mo with AutoPay*

Taxes & Equipment Fees Included

- ✓ NO contracts
- ✓ All-In Pricing*
- ✓ Price-Lock Guarantee*
- ✓ FREE Installation*
- ✓ FREE eero WiFi router*
- ✓ Local customer support



CALL 1-833-544-2983
VISIT SurfInternet.com

*Restrictions apply. Visit SurfInternet.com for details.

Bank Anywhere!

- Check Account Balances
- View Account History
- Transfer Funds
- Pay Bills
- Mobile Check Deposit
- Find Branch & ATM Locations

Download our mobile app from your smartphone.





Bank of Pontiac

Bloomington • Coal City • Delavan • Dwight • Fairbury • Forrest
Melvin • Minier • Odell • Paxton • Piper City • Pontiac
Toll FREE 855-844-6151 | www.bankofpontiac.com
Member FDIC

Web access is needed to use Mobile Banking. Check with your service provider for details on specific fees and charges.

OBITUARIES

Donna Calhoun

BRAIDWOOD—Donna Jean Calhoun, 70, of Braidwood, formerly of Braceville, passed away Friday, Aug. 14, 2026, at the University of Chicago Medical Center.

Born Feb. 18, 1956, in Joliet, Donna was the daughter of Mae (Reynolds) Byerley and the late Charles Byerley. She was raised in Braceville and graduated from Gardner South Wilmington High School with the class of 1974. On March 6, 1976, Donna married Michael William Calhoun at Braceville United Methodist Church. Together, they made their home in Braceville before moving to Braidwood, where they raised their daughters.

Donna was a lifelong and devoted member of Braceville United Methodist Church, and her faith was of deep importance to her. She worked for several years at Jemco before gaining employment with Hollywood Casino, where she spent 25 years as a Quality Assurance Technician. Donna demonstrated her love through acts of service, whether volunteering at Kuzma Care Cottage in Wilmington or sharing handmade gifts with those she loved. She enjoyed baking, gardening, and crocheting and often used those talents as another way to care for others. Donna was also a die-hard Chicago Cubs fan and faithfully followed and supported her team until the very end.

Though she struggled with her health these past few years, she attended to every challenge with poise, quiet grace, and faith. Donna demonstrated her determination on a regular basis to live her life to the fullest, and being present as a loving and devoted mother, daughter, Nana, sister, and aunt to her family. The family wants to extend their deepest gratitude to all of the family members and friends who helped make the final chapter of Donna's life as full as it could be.



Survivors include her mother, Mae Byerley and three daughters: Pam (Bill) Raber, Katie (Branden) Johnson, and Samantha (Nick) Montgomery; three grandchildren: Bobby (Miki) Raber, Amelia Johnson, and Everett Montgomery; one brother and three sisters: Linda (Mike) Schott, Charles Byerley, Patricia (the late Fred) Wood, and Sharon O'Donnell; two sisters-in-law, Susie Byerley Flowers and Juanita (Manuel) Yeates; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Donna was preceded in death by her father, Charles Byerley, and her husband, Michael W. Calhoun; two brothers, Robert and Clyde Byerley; and two brothers-in-law, John Mack and John Yeates.

Per Donna's wishes, cremation rites are being accorded.

The family will receive friends for a memorial visitation at Baskerville Funeral Home, 700 E. Kahler Road, in Wilmington on Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2026 from 4 to 7 p.m. Funeral services will follow at Braceville United Methodist Church, 106 W. Gould Street, on Thursday, Aug. 20, 2026 at 12 p.m. Inurnment will follow at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, where Donna will be laid to rest with her husband, Michael.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Donna's memory to Braceville United Methodist Church, 106 W. Gould St., Braceville, IL 60407, or Kuzma Care Cottage, 635 S. Main Street, Wilmington, IL 60481.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guest book, upload photographs, and share Donna's memorial page via social media.

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

Thomas R. Buban



GODLEY—Thomas R. Buban, 85, of Godley, passed away Sunday, Aug. 16, 2026 at Lightways Inpatient Hospice in Joliet.

Born March 30, 1941, in Chicago, Thomas Richard was the son of Thomas and Anne (Hajcak) Buban. He moved with his family from Chicago to Godley at an early age, attended Saint Rose Parochial High School with the class of 1959. Following high school, Tom attended Winona State University in Minnesota before entering the United States Marine Corps. He proudly served from June 1961 until his honorable discharge in June 1964.

On July 13, 1968, Tom married Linnea Hudziak during a Mass celebrated by Father Burns at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Braidwood. Together, Tom and Linnea made their home in Godley, where they raised their family and shared more than 56 years of marriage.

A devoted Catholic, Tom was formerly a parishioner of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Braidwood and was currently a member of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Coal City, where he enjoyed serving at Mass.

Following his service in the Marines, Tom began a career with United Parcel Service. Starting as a delivery driver, he worked his way into management before taking an early retirement. He later worked for the Godley Park District and was always willing to lend his skills as a handyman to friends and neighbors. Tom also served his community as Mayor of Godley.

Farming remained an important part of Tom's life for nearly all of his years. In more recent years, he devoted much of himself to caring for his wife, Linnea, a role he took on with steadfast love and dedication.

Tom was a hardworking, straightforward man who knew what he liked and was rarely persuaded otherwise. He had a wonderful sense of humor, a willingness to



help those around him, and above all, a deep love for his family. He will be remembered for the life he built, the people he helped, and the family he loved.

Survivors include his children, Lisa (Steve) Pitts, of Wilmington and Tom Buban, of Chicago; grandchildren: Devin Pitts and Abby Pitts; nephews: John and Michael Slanicky and niece, Rosanne Whyte.

Tom was preceded in death by his parents, wife, Linnea on March 30, 2024 and his sister, Theresa Slanicky.

The family will receive friends for a visitation at Reeves Funeral Home, 75 N. Broadway (one block north of Illinois Route 113) in Coal City on Thursday, Aug. 20, 2026 from 4 p.m. until time of time of memory sharing and recitation of the Holy Rosary at 7:30 p.m.

Funeral services will follow Friday morning, Aug. 21, 2026 at 11 a.m. in Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, 215 S. Kankakee St. in Coal City. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated with Reverend Josh Miller presiding and Deacon William Dunn assisting. A memorial luncheon will be provided in the Berst Hall of Assumption Parish at the conclusion of the Mass, and burial with full military honors will be held at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood at 2:30 p.m. Tom will be laid to rest with his late wife, Linnea.

Preferred memorials may be made as Masses in Tom's memory or to Lightways Hospice, 250 Waterstone Circle, Joliet, IL 60431.

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

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

U.S. corn crop ratings decline two weeks in a row

BY DANIEL GRANT
FARMWEEK

US corn condition ratings dipped another 2 points to 61% in the good-to-excellent category in USDA's latest crop progress report released Aug. 3.

It marks two straight weeks of declines following a 4-point drop in the July 27 crop progress report. The portion of the corn crop rated good to excellent is now 12 points below the same time last year.

The rest of the corn crop is currently rated 25% fair and 14% poor to very poor nationwide.

The portion of soybeans rated good to excellent Aug. 3 was unchanged from the previous week, at 63%, but down 6 points compared to the same time last year. The remaining US bean crop is currently rated 28% fair and 9% poor to very poor.

"Right now, we're at a transition point for these crops," Rich Nelson, chief

strategist at Allendale Inc. in McHenry, told FarmWeek. "If the weather forecast (of more regular rain showers) holds true, it could be a strong finish and could repair some of the earlier (crop) damage."

So, how much weight do the sinking crop ratings have on the market, particularly ahead of USDA's much-anticipated crop production report Aug. 12?

"Crop ratings are not exactly the best measurement for final yields, but there is a relationship there and they do a good job predicting what direction USDA may go (in its first yield estimates of the year Aug. 12 using farmer survey data)," Nelson said.

"If you use the ratings by themselves, our numbers would imply we could see a 1.9% yield hit, with an average yield of 179.6 (bushels per acre nationwide for corn)," he continued. "But our weather data would imply a yield closer to 181.5."

USDA's initial yield

estimates heading into the August report pegged national average yields at 183 bushels per acre for corn and 53 for soybeans.

"There's a lot of questions still ahead," Nelson said. "The markets are not trading that (yield) number (implied by lower crop conditions). The market is trading slightly above trend yield."

Commodity firm StoneX on Aug. 4 estimated US corn production at 16.16 billion bushels with an average yield of 184.8 bushels per acre, well above USDA's estimate, with an average soybean yield of 53 bushels. Allendale Inc. will conduct its annual farmer survey about crop expectations Aug. 17-28 and results will be announced the first week of September.

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow

Diana D. Vestal

MORRIS—Diana D. Vestal, 50, of Morris, passed away on Monday, Aug. 10, 2026 at Lightways Hospice in Joliet, surrounded by her loved ones.

She was born on July 27, 1976 in Chicago to Dallas and Mary (nee Hager) Napier. She grew up in the Channahon and Minooka areas, graduating with Minooka High School class of 1994. Diana married the love of her life, Jacob Vestal, on Dec. 5, 2003 at The Mansion in Dwight. Together, they made their home in Morris and Coal City and raised their two sons.

A true entrepreneur, Diana was a partnered owner of Distinct Visions and Salon Trends as a beautician, Boutique Clothing stores in Coal City and Morris and Digital Design Vinyl and Print. She was a devoted BMX Racing mom and enjoyed traveling to her son's competitions, volunteering to make banners and stickers and photo-



graphing the riders. There was no end to Diana's creativity and her passion. She found great joy in her businesses and with her family. She also counted many friendships along the way in her life.

She is survived by her husband of 22 years, Jake and their two sons, Damen and Gaven. Several aunts and cousins also survive.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Visitation was held Friday, Aug. 14, 2026 at the Ferrari Funeral Chapel in Coal City.

Cremation rites were accorded following the visitation.

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

Ferrari Funeral Services of Coal City were entrusted with arrangements.

Jeanine Congalton

FULLERTON, CA—K. Jeanine Congalton, formerly of Coal City, currently of Fullerton, CA, passed away unexpectedly earlier this month, she would have turned 70 later this month. Raised in Coal City, where she was an honor student, she completed her undergraduate degree at Illinois State and still counted her Redbird friends in her closest circle. Jeanine earned her M.A. at North Dakota State where she briefly taught early in her career before completing her Ph.D. at the University of Utah, where she created her strongest personal and academic relationships.

After three years at California State University-Fresno, Jeanine spent the bulk of her career at California State University, Fullerton, where she became an institution, for many years coaching their successful forensics program. Her forensics service was vast, having served as District/Chair of the American Forensics Association's National Individual Events Tournament, where she was a fixture on the tournament tabulation staff and was bestowed with their Distinguished Service Award in 1997. She was a favorite judge on the National Debate Tournament circuit and coached numerous students to national tournaments. She was an officer in the International Forensics Association for a decade and worked in tabulation rooms at hundreds of forensics contests at all levels.

Jeanine was the unsung hero of the Human Communication Studies department at California State University, Fullerton, serving perpetually on personnel, graduate, and search committees copiously combing through hundreds of files, and meticulously reviewing adjunct and graduate student instructors. Despite all her dedicated service, her clear legacy was her students. She was a devoted teacher, paying special attention to those students with extra challenges, creating in them a sense of self-confidence and success. During the pandemic she would drive to her campus parking lot to connect to university wi-fi, teaching classes from



her car. She followed the careers of generations of her students, even if that meant showing up at an 8 a.m. convention panel or drafting volumes of thoughtful letters of recommendation. Many, if not nearly all, institutions in southern California likely have at least one instructor who was trained and mentored by Jeanine. Scores of her students comment that she's the role model for how they conduct their lives, both professionally and personally. Her idea of work/life balance was taking a stack of papers to grade on the grounds of her beloved Disneyland, where she valued and regularly used her annual pass. Jeanine was a lifelong fan of the Chicago Cubs, Bears, and Blackhawks, and a season ticket holder to CSUF Titan baseball, where her second home was Goodwin Field.

She was a dedicated aunt, attending countless soccer, lacrosse, and baseball games of her nieces and nephews. The U.S. Postal Service has been kept solvent by her mailing greeting cards for every known occasion, always including a dollar bill, to her sphere of friends, mere acquaintances, their families and extended networks. Nearly everyone she met made it into her address book. Jeanine was generous to a fault, always being the first to "treat" whoever she was visiting.

She is survived by her sister, Donna (Roger) Hanley, of Tampa; sister-in-law, Kris DiPaolo, 10 nieces and nephews, numerous great-nieces and nephews and a wide circle of friends who remain in shock at her unanticipated passing.

Jeanine was preceded in death by her parents, Pete and Catherine (Kay) DiPaolo, formerly of Coal City and brother, David, of Corona, CA.

A celebration of life will be hosted on Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 at 3 p.m. in room CBE/SGMH 1502 at California State University, Fullerton, where she leaves many saddened colleagues and associates. Memorials can be made to the CSU, Fullerton Jeanine Congalton Scholarship already established in her honor.

Fossil Ridge Library News

Children & Toddler Programs

Tuesday, Aug. 25
Play-Doh Playdates, 10:30-11 a.m. Play-Doh workshop. Display your creativity using our Play-Doh and tools. For Children ages 2-6.

Thursday, Aug. 27
Toddler Time, 10-11 a.m. We welcome toddlers and their caregivers to join us weekly to explore various toys and sensory materials. Toddlers can enhance their gross and fine motor skills, social interaction, and language skills. Caregivers must accompany their little ones, registration is required

Braidwood blood drive scheduled for September 17

The City of Braidwood will host its next community blood drive on Thursday, Sept. 17, from 2 to 6 p.m. in the meeting room at Braidwood City Hall, 141 W. Main Street.

Pre-registration is highly recommended, although walk-in donors will also be accepted.

To register, please visit the online registration link provided by the city or contact Blood Drive Coordinator Josh Bolatto at

(815) 458-2342 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

As part of Versiti's September donor promotion, individuals who donate blood will be entered into the Fire Up Your Team Sweepstakes for a chance to win a Chicago Fire FC VIP Team Experience. Participants must be at least 18-years-old to be eligible for the sweepstakes.



Photo by Catrina Rawson of FarmWeek

US CORN CROP ratings declined each of the past two weeks, just ahead of USDA's crop production report Aug. 12.

Symerton Homecoming 2026

Tues, August 18 Elwood vs. Symerton—16" Softball game @ 6 pm
Weds, August 19 Manhattan vs. Symerton— 16" Softball game @ 6 pm
Thurs, August 20 Manhattan vs. Elwood —16" Softball game @ 6 pm
Car/Vintage Tractor Show 4:30-7:30 pm (WEATHER PERMITTING)
Fri, August 21 The Southside Social Club Live Band on the patio—7:00 pm
Sat, August 22 "The Equals" Live Band @ 7:00-10:00 pm on the patio
Volley Ball Tournament Reg. 10am - Start 10:30
Sun, August 23 Tractor Pull @ noon North side of the park
Kiddie Pedal Pull—Register @ 1 pm/pull starts @ 2 pm
Ice Cream Truck 12 noon—2 pm and "Ice Ice Baby" icees
Billy Gray Music—3:00 pm

Sunday: All day long: Kids activities, face painting & games, animal petting zoo and show, 50/50 raffle and drinks and food at Symerton Tap and Grill.

⇒ Mr. K's Chuckwagon (Serving Saturday from 11 am—8 pm & Sunday 11 am—6 pm)



Presented by:
The Village of Symerton



Photo by Eric Fisher

A SECTION OF the rooftop at Tire Tracks, 507 W. Baltimore St, was lifted away by 100 mph wind or possible tornado on Tuesday around 11 a.m. Nearby buildings were mostly spared as debris from the powerful blast fell across two parking lots to the east.

Berkot's power restored after storm, Tire Tracks faces a longer recovery

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

The severe storms and tornado activity that swept through the area Aug. 11 left their mark across Will County, forcing temporary closures at several local establishments.

Among the larger businesses affected were Berkot's Super Foods locations in Braidwood, Wilmington, and Peotone, all of which lost power during the storm. Company officials said the closures were caused by electrical outages rather than structural damage to the stores.

Teamwork saves the day

The Wilmington Berkot's location reopened Aug. 13 at 2 p.m. after power was restored and employees completed extensive food safety and recovery procedures.

"We are fully open, fully operational now," said Assistant Manager Madeline Evans. "We had a massive recovery team, spectacular employees that helped us make sure that we took care of all of our freezer items, our cold items, dairy, meat department. We did everything by the book, taking care of our food to make sure we lost as little as possible and kept everything safe and healthy for our customers."

Evans said employees worked through an enormous amount of recovery

work to prepare the store for reopening.

"I had come in for my shift and then volunteered the following day to help with getting everything back how it's supposed to be," she said. "We had to follow our guidelines. Basically the same way that we get our freezer items in is how we have to get them right back."

She credited employees across the store for stepping up during the crisis.

"Please ensure that you put in how grateful we are for all of our employees," Evans said. "I cannot stress that enough. We've had people working jobs they've never worked before, going above and beyond. We are just so grateful for everyone who's helped."

Safe evacuation, no injuries reported

A spokesperson at the Braidwood Berkot's said the store regained power late Aug. 13 and immediately began restocking shelves and inspecting inventory.

"We just got power back late last night (Aug. 13), so we're in the process of getting the store restocked," he said.

The Braidwood store has since reopened.

The spokesperson was working when the outage occurred and said customers were inside the store when power was lost.

Fortunately, everyone exited safely and no injuries were reported.

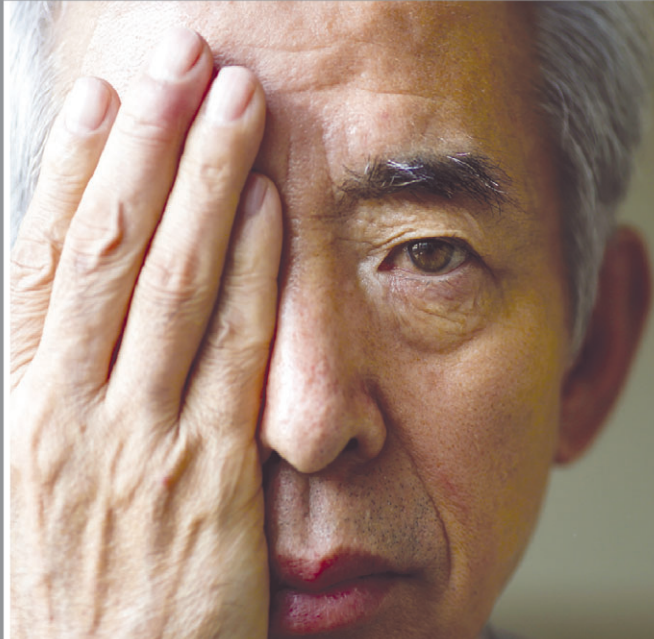
One of the hardest-hit commercial properties was Tire Tracks Auto Care at 507 W. Baltimore St. in Wilmington. According to the National Weather Service, the auto repair shop was the precise point where an EF-1 tornado first touched down Tuesday morning.

The tornado, with estimated peak winds of 90 mph, ripped away a substantial portion of the building's roof and scattered debris into a neighboring strip mall, causing additional damage. Witnesses described the scene as resembling a "war zone" in the hours after the storm.

Despite the destruction, Tire Tracks' parent company, GreatWater 360 Auto Care, said all employees escaped without injury.

"It's been a tough week for our shop and the community," the company said in a public statement. "We were hit hard by Mother Nature, and while our building sustained significant damage, we're incredibly grateful to share that everyone is safe."

The Wilmington Tire Tracks location remains closed while company officials evaluate repairs and reconstruction options. Customers with appointments have been directed to the company's Bradley and Manteno locations.



Glaucoma often does not produce symptoms until the disease has progressed and caused irreversible vision loss.

That's why early detection and treatment are key to protecting your sight.

You may not see Glaucoma coming...
But We Will.

If you're age 40 or older, or if you have diabetes, high blood pressure or a family history of glaucoma, talk to us to learn more or to schedule a screening

815-468-2015
501 S. Locust St. (Rt. 50) • Manteno

FISHER-GENTRY EYE CARE





Protect Her

Yes, your newborn is precious! And you're busy taking care of her every need. That's what good parents do. But will she inherit your assets if something tragic happens?

Make sure she does with a solid estate plan. As experienced attorneys, we have the expertise to protect your assets and ensure they are distributed according to your wishes, while helping your loved ones minimize taxes and avoid probate.

Don't wait another day to make sure your family and your final wishes are protected. Schedule a consultation today, and get the answers you need.

with expert estate planning you can trust

MEENTS LAW, P.C.
Family Law | Real Estate | Business
Estate Planning | Probate

207 S. Water St., Wilmington • 815-476-7635



Do you have pain in your
Neck • Back • Shoulder
Elbow • Hand • Knee • Hip
Foot or Ankle?

MOVE WELL. LIVE BETTER!

Our specialists provide expert care and treatment of orthopedic-related injuries and problems, always considering conservative treatment methods first.

And if surgery is needed, we offer the latest innovations and techniques to help you move well and live better, including Mako™ Robotic-Arm Assisted Surgery.

Orthopedic Surgeons: Dr. Ahmed Eldib, Dr. Keith Rezin, Dr. Stephen Treacy, Dr. Robert Williams
Orthopedic Spine Surgeon: Dr. Mir Ali
Foot & Ankle Surgeon: Dr. Kyle Pearson

Call today for an appointment:
Diamond-Coal City and Morris 815-942-4875
Joliet (Houbolt Rd) 815-741-4000
Ottawa 815-433-0850





MORRIS HOSPITAL
ORTHOPEDICS
& SPORTS MEDICINE

morrishospital.org/orthopedics

AUTO • HOME • LIFE • BUSINESS • PROPERTY

Your local State Farm Agent for 30 years

Jerry Hallahan - Agent

1350 E. Division St., Diamond

(815) 634-2222 jerry@jerryhallahan.com

INSURANCE

MOTORCYCLE • REG VEHICLES • WATERCRAFT • LIABILITY

warrencollisioncenteril.com



✓ **Finest quality warranted collision repair**
 ✓ **Rentals available**
 ✓ **Certified technicians**
 ✓ **All insurance accepted**
 ✓ **Completed in a timely fashion**

WARREN'S COLLISION CENTER

860 E.Z. St., Braidwood
815-458-3300

WE CARE BEYOND THE REPAIR!



Happy 80th Birthday Richard (Sonny) Konc

August 19, 2026

Hope you have a very Happy 80th Birthday!!

All of our love,
 Your wife, daughters, son, son-in-laws,
 grandchildren, great grandchildren,
 Baby & Calli

SUNDAY FUNDAY!

DOORS OPEN AT NOON! FIRST RAFFLE AT 2PM!
 It's NOT BINGO but a RAFFLE like BINGO... You play it like BINGO!! Lots of cash prizes!!! BIG PRIZES!!!

QUEEN of HEARTS

Every **TUESDAY** at 553 W. Kennedy Rd. Braidwood
 You must play BINGO to participate.

Doors open at 4pm. Drawing is held at intermission.

Queen of Hearts Pot is \$11,830.00

For BINGO players only on Tuesday nites and see the QUEEN rules at the BINGO hall for rules and regulations.

Braidwood Post 039 BINGO

Tuesday Night Flash Max Bingo

Pull Tabs	6:30pm	Hot Food, Snacks & Beverages
Bingo	6:30pm	553 Kennedy Road
Doors Open	4:00pm	Braidwood, IL 60408

Home of the "Big Guy"
 Commander Bill Kiley
 815-216-2570

CASH FOR CARS PROGRAM

Turn Your Inoperable Vehicle Into CASH!

Presented by the
City of Wilmington Code Enforcement Division

In Conjunction with Broadway Auto Salvage as a Service to the Residents.

DO YOU HAVE AN INOPERABLE, JUNK, OR UNWANTED VEHICLE?
 Now is the perfect time to remove it from your property voluntarily and put cash in your pocket!

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

- CALL BROADWAY AUTO SALVAGE 815-237-8747**
- SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT**
 A representative will come to your property, inspect the vehicle, and make you a cash offer.
- GET PAID**
 If you accept the offer, Broadway Auto Salvage will:
 • Pay you cash for the vehicle
 • Tow it away at no cost to you
It's that easy!

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- You must have the vehicle title or be able to prove ownership.
- This program is completely voluntary.
- Do not wait!** Once a Code Enforcement case has been initiated and a citation has been issued for a junk or inoperable vehicle, Broadway Auto Salvage will not purchase the vehicle through this program.
- The City of Wilmington will continue enforcing all applicable property maintenance and junk vehicle ordinances throughout the program period.

WHY PARTICIPATE?

- Receive cash for your unwanted vehicle
- Free up valuable space on your property
- No lowering arrangements to make
- Help improve your neighborhood
- Avoid possible Code Enforcement action for junk or inoperable vehicles

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!
 Take advantage of this opportunity before enforcement action becomes necessary.

QUESTIONS?
BROADWAY AUTO SALVAGE 815-237-8747
 CITY OF WILMINGTON CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

CLEAN PROPERTIES | **SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS** | **COMMUNITY PRIDE**

DISCLAIMER: Any vehicle transaction is solely between the property owner and Broadway Auto Salvage. The City of Wilmington is not responsible for any services provided by the salvage company.

Wilmington EST. 1924
 THE ISLAND CITY, ILLINOIS

Nobody in Springfield is automatically entitled to a decade at the top

After Michael J. Madigan's 36 years as Illinois House Speaker, a ten-year term limit on current and future speakers doesn't seem like a lot of time in the big chair. Except it is.



CAPITOL FACTS

Rich Miller

Nobody prior to Madigan had ever served ten years as speaker in this state going back to when Illinois became a state in 1818. The only person who came close was Republican Warren Wood, who held the position for eight years in the 1950s.

Most of the rest served single terms or two terms.

Democrat Paul Powell, served six years, including two years before Speaker Wood and four years after. Powell became infamous for stashing cash in shoe boxes at his Springfield hotel residence and died with an estimated fortune of \$4.6 million. But I digress.

Another Democrat, Bill Redmond, also held the gavel for six years, although the future Speaker Madigan held quite a bit of sway over him in the late 1970s.

Two Republicans served as speaker for six years each in the early

1900s. But that's about it.

Republican George Ryan was speaker for two years before he was tapped to be Gov. Jim Thompson's running mate. In the 1930s, four different members (three Democrats and one Republican)

held the gavel for just two years each. 47 out of 70 House Speakers served two years or less (four days in the case of George Ryan's Majority Leader Art Telcser).

What I'm getting at is ten years is actually a long time. More importantly, though, the ten-year ceiling has also somehow become a floor — an expected decade-long entitlement.

House Speaker Chris Welch has obviously fully intended to serve the full decade since he was first elected to the chamber's top job for a two-year term in 2021. You may have noticed that a couple of his members who spoke out early about his mishandling of the Harry Benton sexual harassment matter suddenly went silent. That was no coincidence.

Pressure is being exerted on the rank and file. His team wants those ten years.

But a decade with the gavel is not only historically unique, it's also longer than the average service time for House Democratic members, which is currently 8.4 years. That's up a bit from a six-year average in 2020, according to the Statehouse's unofficial honorary historian (title I just made up) John Amdor. But it's still below the ten-year House Speaker term limit.

Starting in the final two decades of the previous century, the Senate has a history of electing Senate Presidents to multiple terms. Democrat Phil Rock held the Senate's gavel for 14 years. Then, Republican Pate Philip served ten years before the Democrats won the right to draw the new district map in 2001.

Democrat Emil Jones was the chamber's top person for six years, and was replaced by Democrat John Cullerton for 11 years. Current Senate President Don Harmon was first elevated in 2020, but he's eligible to serve until 2031 because that first year after Cullerton resigned mid-term doesn't count toward the chamber's ten-year term limit.

Before Phil Rock, most Senate Presidents served just two to six years, except for the ten years that Republican Sen. Art Bidwell held the gavel from

1955-1965,

One of the reasons that House Speakers and Senate Presidents served such short stints was that party dominance wasn't assured like it has been for the past several decades. Partisan majorities flipped back and forth much more before the advent of computer-driven redistricting.

Republicans and Downstate Democrats would also occasionally scheme to prevent Chicago from holding power in their chambers (which is how Paul Powell was first elected speaker).

I'm not advocating here for reducing the term limits to six years or whatever. But what I am saying is that Illinois government will not crash and burn if Speaker Welch and Senate President Harmon don't serve their full five two-year General Assemblies as their chambers' leaders.

They should both have to earn each and every one of their two-year terms. A ten-year stint should not be considered the minimum length of service. If their members want both of them to stick around, that's their decision, as long as they recognize that nobody is automatically entitled to a decade at the top.

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

New law requires all pharmacies to display 988 Crisis Lifeline information

BY ROSE PANIERI
 STAFF WRITER

A new Illinois law sponsored by State Rep. Jackie Haas is aimed at making life-saving mental health resources more visible by requiring pharmacies across the state to display information about the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. This bipartisan measure will help those most in need by requiring pharmacies to display signs with information about the lifeline.

House Bill 4982 was recently signed into law by Gov. JB Pritzker following bipartisan approval in the Illinois General Assembly. The legislation requires pharmacies to post signs with information about the statewide 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, along with other mental health awareness and assistance

resources.

Haas said the measure is designed to connect more Illinois residents with help during a mental health crisis.

"On Friday (July 31), House Bill 4982 was signed into law," Haas said in a statement. "This bipartisan measure will help those most in need by requiring pharmacies to display signs with information about the statewide 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, as well as other awareness and assistance information. This will ensure more Illinoisans are aware of the important, life-saving resources our state offers."

She also thanked lawmakers from both parties for supporting the legislation.

"I am incredibly thankful for the bipartisan support this bill received, and look forward to continuing my work on this important issue," Haas said.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides free, confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for people experiencing mental health crises, suicidal thoughts, or emotional distress. The service also offers assistance to individuals concerned about a loved one.

Supporters of the legislation say pharmacies are

well-positioned to help raise awareness because they serve people of all ages and often interact with individuals managing both physical and mental health conditions.

By placing 988 information in a highly visible location, the law aims to make it easier for people to find help when they need it most.

DAR prospective member workshop

The Kankakee Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution is hosting a free workshop Saturday, Aug. 29 from 9:30 a.m. to noon at the Bradley Public Library where experienced genealogists from our State Lineage Team will be available to help trace your family's history and determine your eligibility for Daughters of the American Revolution membership.

Attendees should bring any genealogy records they have on paper or computer. If you are 18 years or older and believe your lineage can be traced to a patriot who supported the cause of American independence, we hope to see you there.

For additional information, contact Lee Ann Hollenbeck, (815) 592-4058, Registrar, Kankakee Chapter, NSDAR.

VFW AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

★ 2026-2027 ★

Their Fight. Their Story. Our Voice.

HONORING VETERANS • INSPIRING STUDENTS • SUPPORTING EDUCATION

 VOICE OF DEMOCRACY® Grades 9-12 Audio-Essay Competition Theme: "What a Veteran Taught Me About America" Deadline: October 31, 2026	 PATRIOT'S PEN® Grades 6-8 Patriotic Essay Competition Theme: "What a Veteran Taught Me About America" Deadline: October 31, 2026	 YOUNG AMERICAN CREATIVE PATRIOTIC ART CONTEST PATRIOTIC ART & 3D ART Grades 9-12 Create original patriotic artwork. Deadline: March 31, 2027	 CONTINUING EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP For VFW Auxiliary members and immediate family members pursuing: ✓ College ✓ Technical School ✓ Trade School ✓ Vocational Training Deadline: February 15, 2027
---	--	---	--

LEARN MORE
 Barbara Sweger
 Department Scholarship Chairman
 deptlyouth@yahoo.com
 815-481-8288
 VFW Auxiliary Department of Illinois

SCAN FOR APPLICATIONS & DETAILS!

Investing in Our Future • Honoring Their Legacy

★ ★ ★ ★ **THANK YOU VETERANS!** ★ ★ ★ ★

CLASSIFIEDS

CLASSIFIED DEADLINES

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

Deadlines
Classified Ads & Classified Display Ads
Fridays - 5 p.m.

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

Cost
Line Ads are up to 30 words (20¢ for each word over 30)
1 wk.- \$17; 2 wks.- \$21;
3 wks.- \$25; 4 wks.-\$29*
\$1.00 Extra per line for bold or caps on classified
*plus .0399% with credit card

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

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

HELP WANTED

Help Wanted: Bob's Advanced Auto & Tire, Inc. Seeking lube technician for our high volume auto repair shop. Must have drivers license. apply within at 60 E. Chestnut St. Coal City. 815-634-0004

SERVICE & REPAIRS

A Thousand Words Photography
385 N. Second Ave. Coal City
Mandy Eaton 815-791-2913

REAL ESTATE

SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE of **319 N KANKAKEE ST, WILMINGTON, IL 60481** (not applicable). On the 27th day of August, 2026 to be held at 12:00 noon, at the Will County Courthouse, 100 W. Jefferson Street, Room 1001, Joliet, IL 60432, under Case Title: **NEWREZ LLC D/B/A SHELLPOINT MORTGAGE SERVICING Plaintiff V. MARC OSMANSON; BREANNE OSMANSON; PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS; STATE OF ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE; CHICAGO TITLE LAND TRUST COMPANY D/B/A THE LAND TRUST COMPANY, AS TRUSTEE; SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS;** Defendant. Case No. **25 FC 1093** in the Circuit Court of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Will County, Illinois. Terms of Sale: ten percent (10%) at the time of sale and the balance within twenty-four (24) hours. No judicial sale fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. All payments shall be made in cash or certified funds payable to the Sheriff of Will County. In the event the property is a condominium, in accordance with 735 ILCS 5/15-1507(c)(1)-(H-1) and (H-2), 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(5), and 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g)-1), you are hereby notified that the purchaser of the unit, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 and the assessments required by subsection (g)-1) of Section 18.5 of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. Pursuant to Local Court Rule 11.03 (J) if there is a surplus following application of the proceeds of sale, then the plaintiff shall send written notice pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1512(d) to all parties to the proceeding advising them of the amount of the surplus and that the surplus will be held until a party obtains a court order for its distribution or, in the absence of an order, until the surplus is forfeited to the State. For Information Please Contact: **ANSELMO LINDBERG OLIVER LLC, 1771 W. Diehl Rd. Suite 120 NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS 60563 P: 630-453-6960 F: 630-428-4620** PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THIS LAW FIRM IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. Published in the Free Press Newspapers on Wed., Aug. 5, 12, and 19, 2026

LOST & FOUND

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

Bubbles Cleaning Service

Dawn Boardman Business and Home Cleaning Service. Weekly, bi-weekly, monthly. Many references available. Please leave message 815-661-6180. cc28-56

PETS

Large Selection of Dog and Cat Food, treats, accessories, health aids, clothing, Birthday treats, wall art, jewelry, gifts, greeting cards and Home of Fritters for Critters Pet Treats. New! Brew and Chew Dog Treats. Trinity Barkery 240 W. Baltimore Wilmington., IL 60481 815-476-5104 slewis@trinityservices.org.

Mike Collins Roofing, re-shingles and gutter cleaning, aluminum gutter screen, no repair to small or too big. Free roof inspection. Low prices. Lic #104.007296 Ask for Mike at 815-730-1303. cc19-44

WANTED

WANTED SCRAP METAL

- Farm Machinery
- Garden Tractors
- Snowmobiles
- Appliances
- Anything Metal

Free pickup 7 days 815-210-8819

Climate change and wine production

Dear EarthTalk: Has climate change already had any significant impacts on wine production around the world?
-Wendy Baumgarten, Dubuque, Iowa

EARTH TALK

Questions & Answers About Our Environment

Eight out of the ten hottest years on record have occurred in the past decade. Thus, it is no surprise that rising global temperatures have had a significant impact on wine production.

One study by the University of British Columbia (UBC) found that temperatures during the wine growing season have drastically increased around the world. "That kind of change can affect harvest times, grape ripening, and thus the taste of the wine," reports UBC's Elizabeth Wolkovich, one of the study authors.

One aspect of wine production that climate change has affected is the growing cycle. Warmer temperatures lead to the growing cycle happening earlier. In fact, budding, flowering, fruit-set, veraison

(when the grapes begin to ripen and change color), and harvest all take place around ten days to two weeks sooner than normal. This leads to higher alcohol levels, lower acidity levels, and less refined tannins, all of which affect taste.

Hot temperatures during the growing season also make it more difficult for those who grow wine to achieve balance in the fruit. During the winter, mild temperatures lead to vines coming out of dormancy quicker and becoming more vulnerable to frost as a result.

Global warming has also increased weather disasters. As vines are one of the most weather-sensitive agricultural crops, weather catastrophes can be detrimental. Smoke from wildfires can easily cover vineyards and ruin wines, a phenomenon that has already occurred in the U.S., Australia, and South Africa. A shortage of rainwater can decrease the fruitfulness of wine production, while hail can be extremely destructive.

Droughts and wildfires, both of which have become more common due to climate change, have therefore negatively affected the quality of harvests.

Amid this crisis, one study published in the

journal Nature Reviews Earth and Environment shows that around 90 percent of coastal and low-altitude regions in California may be unable to produce good wine if global warming exceeds +2°C, reducing the growable surface area of wine.

With increasing temperatures reducing grape crops and the quality of wine, researchers estimate that up to 70 percent of the world's suitable wine regions will become too warm for production by the end of the century. That said, a warmer climate is expected to boost production in 25 percent of current wine regions.

Winemakers have begun taking adaptive measures. For instance, new grape varieties are being used as they are better suited to climate change. Growers can also plant on differently oriented slopes that receive less sun and more wind, or slopes at higher altitudes to mitigate temperature increases.

While these measures may come at high costs, they are now crucial to preserving the prosperity of wine production worldwide.

EarthTalk® a 501(c)(3) nonprofit EarthTalk. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org

Things your family should know in a medical emergency

Ten things every family should know in a medical emergency.

- Learn CPR before you need it.
- Call 911 immediately. Don't wait to "see if they get better."
- Put your phone on speaker. This lets you keep both hands free while following the dispatcher's instructions.
- Unlock the front door before EMS arrives and send someone outside to meet first responders.
- Know where the nearest Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is. Many schools, gyms, churches, airports, community centers, and office buildings have them.

• Create a family emergency plan.

Decide in advance who will call 911, meet first responders outside, gather medications and medical information, and care for children or pets.

• Make sure your house numbers are visible at night.

• Teach everyone in the family where emergency medications are stored.

• Talk with older relatives about their medical history and wishes before an emergency happens.

• Keep a current list of medications, allergies, and medical conditions in an easy-to-find place.

Culligan - Help Wanted - Route Driver

*Responsible for delivering any of our products directly to our customers. The following is a general list, though you may be asked to deliver additional items not listed.

* 5 gal. water * 3 gal. water * 80# & 50# bags of salt * 5 gal. peroxide * Coolers * Cased Water

- A route driver must be able to routinely lift up to 80 lbs.

- Responsibilities include organizing your route in an efficient manner; operating a forklift; maintaining load manifests and any other vehicle documents.

- The following are mandatory requirements the route driver must pass and maintain:

*Must maintain a class C driver's license with an excellent driving record.

*Ability to pass and maintain the motor vehicle background check, the criminal history background check and routine and random drug tests. Building a strong relationship with customers is a vital function of this position.

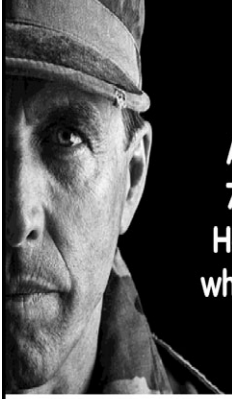
Apply within: Culligan, 75 W. Chestnut St. Coal City

Juster earns dean's list

Carthage College in Wisconsin recognizes Chase Juster from Wilmington, for his academic achievement and being named to the Spring 2026 Dean's List.

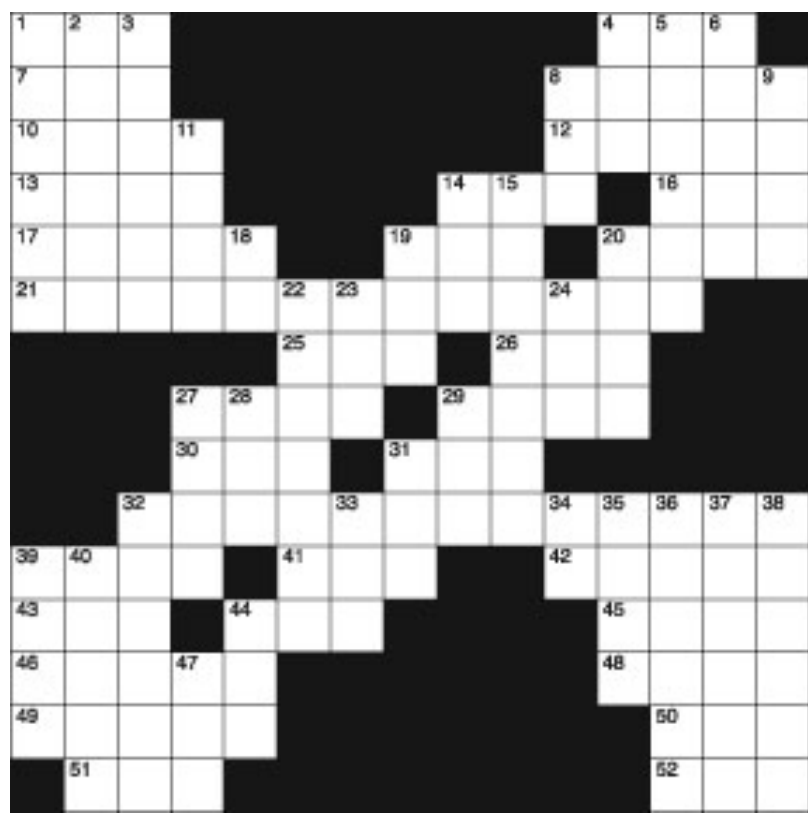
Dean's List honors are accorded to Carthage students who achieve a minimum 3.5 grade-point average.

HELP FOR VETERANS



BE THE ONE is the suicide prevention part of the American Legion. Vets can call: 779-206-8391, The Wilmington Help Line to talk with a Veteran who has had PTSD. There is help, only a phone call away.

In an emergency call the Veterans CRISIS LINE 988 THEN PRESS 1



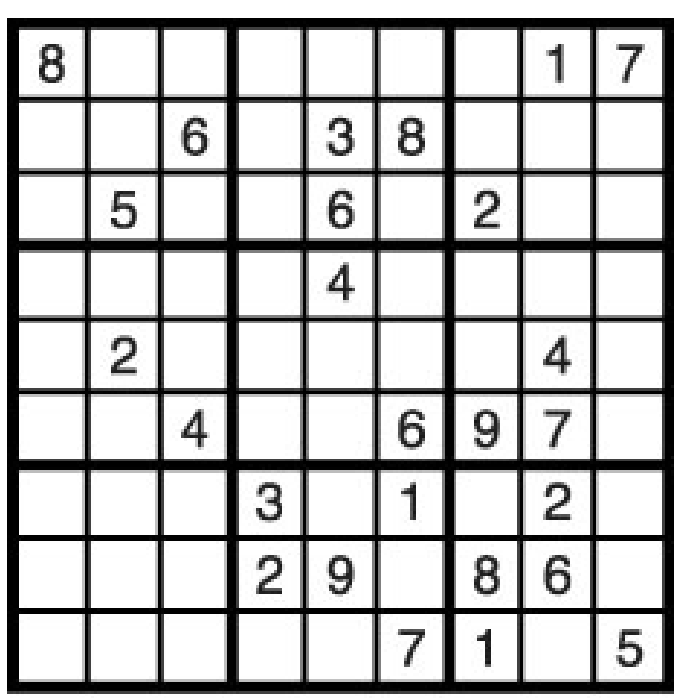
- CLUES ACROSS**

 1. Microgram
 4. Fixed charge
 7. Each
 8. Feeling of humiliation
 10. Coat with sticky substance
 12. Powerful "Severance" family
 13. Japanese city
 14. "Pulp Fiction" actress Thurman
 16. Hat
 17. Place where rockers work
- CLUES DOWN**

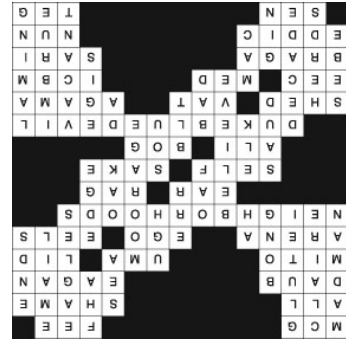
 1. An insane person
 2. "Homeland" actress Danes
 3. Buttock muscles
 4. US federal agency
 5. Birds of prey
 6. Electronic communication
 8. Ocean
 9. Terminates
 11. Low-pitched sound from a bell
 14. Exclamation: yuck!
 15. A place to attach a boat
 18. Exclamation of surprise
 19. Make a mistake
 20. Border line
 22. Have religious faith
 23. Klutz
 24. Large tree
 27. House of ___ rulers
 28. Red deer
 29. Small coin (French)
 31. Popular sandwich
 32. 10-year period
 33. Not good
 34. Government lawyer
 35. Egypt's intelligence agency
 36. Without an occupant or incumbent
 37. Stain with one's hands
 38. Crippling
 39. One point east of southeast
 40. Large, united groups
 44. ___ and cheese
 47. Alcoholic beverage
- CLUES ACROSS**

 19. Psyche
 20. Snakelike fishes
 21. Where people live
 25. Body part
 26. Old towel
 27. One's essential being
 29. Japanese alcoholic beverage
 30. Boxing's GOAT
 31. Wet muddy ground
 32. Christian Laettner is one
 39. A place to store lawn tools

41. Large tub for liquid
42. Old World lizard
43. One-time European member group
44. Healing student
45. Nuclear weapon
46. "Kiss of the Spider Woman" actress Sonia
48. Silk garment
49. About some Norse poems
50. Woman religious community member
51. Congressman (abbr.)
52. Two-year-old sheep



Level: Intermediate



WILDCAT SPORTS

Expectations high for 'Cats coming off third title in five years

BY JIM SHELTON
SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

Death, taxes, playoff football in Wilmington.

Those are the constants in life. Well, at least they have been for 29 straight years for the purple and white. The standards have increased the last five years with three state championships and an overall record of 61-5.

"We lost a lot of talented kids from last year's state team and they were a great group, but I do like the nucleus that we have," said head coach Jeff Reents.

"We have a lot of numbers out in our program too this year which is something I'm really excited about, but for us, it's the same every year. We have to be able to stop the run and be able to run the ball."

Among the top returning players are junior Hunter Kaitschuck (running back/linebacker) who amassed 990 yards on only 74 carries along with seniors Travis Van Duyne (running back/linebacker), Cooper Holman (tight end/defensive lineman), Evan Ostheim (kicker/defensive back), Fynn Bryant (running back/defensive back), Brysen Meents (quarterback/defensive back), Ryan Schraeger (fullback/linebacker), Nash Rink (offensive line/linebacker), Declan Moran (tight end/linebacker) and Will Wilson (offensive/defensive lineman).

"I think Van Duyne is going to be big for us and

Wilson is a three-year starter for us. Kaitschuck is a very good football player who handled himself very well as a sophomore," said Reents. "He's gotten stronger and faster in the offseason. We're very glad that he's playing for us. He's a special player."

He expects senior offensive/defensive linemen Ethan Winker, Dave Castillo, Cam Allen and Brodie Strong along with seniors Colin Van Duyne (offensive line/linebacker), Dane Van Duyne (running back/defensive back) and Bly Bianchetta (running back/linebacker) to step up this season.

"You have guys taking over for other guys, and you're excited to see them play and get their opportunities to see how they do, and you know overall I think our kids have done a really good job," said Reents.

"Colin Van Duyne has had a really good offseason. Allen has battled some injuries, but hopefully he will be able to play some o-line for us. Winker and Castillo developed from last year to this year, and I think they're some guys that can really help us."

"Strong is competing for a spot, and he did a nice job as a junior. Now he's getting better as a senior also I look for Bianchetta to take a big step to being really good at a linebacker spot and helping us out at running back also. I think he's going to be a good one for us along with Dane Van Duyne who got a lot of reps during the season last year, so we're hoping that those help us out there too."

It's another tough opener for the Wildcats as they welcome Bishop McNamara to Jeff Reents Stadium Week 1. The Fighting Irish lost to IC Catholic in the second round of the Class 3A playoffs last year for their lone loss. Week 2 brings a 130-mile trip to Morrison.

"It's great that we're having the opportunity to play Bishop Mac. They're a great team, a great tradition, and you're always anxious as the coach to see how your kids take the step from last year to this year, and you want to get any questions answered in your non-conference schedule, and I think in playing both these teams that we'll be able to do that."

"Bishop Mac is more of a run team, and they have some very good athletes, great speed, and Morrison's a spread team and they pass the ball a lot. So we're going to see two different offenses there the first couple games, and hopefully that gets us ready for a tough Illinois Central Eight conference schedule."

The conference figures once again to come down to Coal City and Wilmington and the two meet Week 9 in Coal City.

"The ICE conference is one of the best conferences in the state, top to bottom. There's some great football that's played in our conference every Friday night. I think the Coalers are probably the number one pick preseason. They have a lot of guys back, particularly some skill guys that got a lot of experience last year," said

Reents.

"We're hoping to be in that mix toward the end of the season to be going for a conference championship. I also feel Manteno is going to be good, and I think Peotone could be good also this year. I'm glad to be a part of the conference."

A change to this year's schedule is the IHSA expanding the playoffs, adding 128 teams, 16 in each class. The top 16 teams will receive a first-round bye. The season is also starting one week earlier which limits practice time before Week 1.

"It reminds me of when I first started. This was the amount of time that we had practicing. So yeah, you're down a couple days, but I also think all the work we did over the summer has helped us catch up."

"Our attendance over the summer has been really good, really happy about that, and so the dedication part of it has been there in the off season, and so hopefully that that gets us to playing good football on Friday nights."

"I'm not a huge fan of the bye. You go all season and get into a routine and now that routine gets broken up. To take two weeks off in between games is something you know I'm not a huge fan of, but it is what it is and if by chance we are in that situation, we'll make it the best we can."

Are there added expectations with three titles in five years? Is the mindset state championship or bust?

Reents says you can't



IN MEMORY OF NICK—Wilmington coach Jeff Reents explains that the 2026 football season has been dedicated to former Wildcat athlete and wrestling/baseball coach Nick Dziuban who lost his battle with cancer on Feb. 2, 2026 at the age of 37. Reents said players decided to wear ND on their jerseys and have them painted on Becker Field. Every time they break from a huddle they will shout ND in memory of Nick.

rest on tradition.

"Our kids can't think because they got Wildcats on the front of their jersey that everybody's going to lay down for us. As a matter of fact, I think everybody steps up their game when they play against us."

"It's a brand new year this year. I'm really happy with where the program is and also very thankful for our kids that have played

in the past. Those guys have built that tradition. Now we need this year's group to continue with that tradition, and just know that we're going to get everybody's best shot, and we have to be prepared for that. Our goals will fall in line if we're playing that high level of football."

District 209U welcomes six new educators

Six new educators will be among the new faces greeting students today (Wednesday) as Wilmington School District 209U opens the doors for the first day of the 2026-27 school year.

The newcomers bring a mix of experience to the district, ranging from first-year teachers to educators who have previously worked in Wilmington schools and the community.

Joining the district are Brittany Allen, Wilmington Middle School librarian; Bill Judge, Wilmington High School building trades instructor; Nick Moe, WHS industrial arts teacher; Lisa Nobles, school counselor; Taylor Pennazzo, WHS librarian; and Zac White, seventh-grade social studies teacher at middle school. White will also serve as the middle school B-team baseball coach.

Here is a closer look at the district's new educators, listed alphabetically:

Brittany Allen WMS librarian

For Allen, joining the staff at WMS is another way to give back to a school district and community she already knows well.

Allen is a WHS graduate who attended Monmouth College, earning a degree in English and secondary education.

She brings a varied background in education to her new position. Allen began as an aide at St. Rose School before leaving for college and has since worked as a permanent substitute, long-term substitute, resource teacher and high school English teacher.

Allen said her goal is to make the library a welcoming and inviting place where every student feels comfortable, valued and excited to visit.

She hopes to get to know students well enough to connect them with books and resources that fit their interests while encouraging learning, creativity and curiosity and helping them develop a lifelong love of reading.

Allen said her teaching philosophy centers on recognizing that every stu-



Courtesy photo

WILMINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICTS new teachers for the 2026-2027 school year (from left) **Brittany Allen** - Wilmington Middle School Librarian, **Taylor Panozzo** - Wilmington High School Librarian, **Lisa Nobles** - WHS Guidance Counselor, **Daniel White** - WMS 7th Grade social studies teacher, **Bill Judge** - WHS Building Trades teacher and **Nick Moe** - WHS Industrial Technology teacher.

dent has unique talents, strengths and interests.

Allen already has strong ties to the Wildcats. She has three children in the district, entering eighth, fifth and fourth grades.

Allen and her family also volunteer throughout the community, helping with everything from designing shirts, signs and backdrops to concessions and parades.

Bill Judge WHS building trades

Judge will teach building trades at the high school, bringing hands-on experience in carpentry and woodworking to the classroom.

Judge grew up in Lake Forest, IL and attended Brother Rice High School. He earned his bachelor's degree at Governors State University and a master's degree from Quincy University.

His previous experience includes working as a dean's assistant at Carl Sandburg High School and teaching CTE/woodshop at Peotone High School.

Judge said one of his primary goals is to pass along the carpentry skills he was taught and have students leave the program job-ready.

His teaching philosophy emphasizes hands-on

training while recognizing that students learn in different ways. He hopes to find the methods that work best for each student.

Judge resides in Plainfield with his wife, two daughters and a golden retriever. Away from school, he enjoys cabinet building, woodworking, fly fishing and traveling.

One interesting chapter in his life came immediately after high school, when Judge was drafted professionally by the Chicago Cubs. He later ran a travel softball program that helped more than 200 players get into college on scholarships and continue their education.

Nick Moe WHS industrial arts

Moe will teach industrial arts to students in grades nine through 12 at Wilmington High School.

A graduate of Plainfield North High School, Moe enters the classroom without previous teaching experience but with extensive practical knowledge of manufacturing and computer-aided design.

His goal for the school year is to build up the CAD classes, bring them closer in line with Joliet Junior College curriculum and explore new ways to bring the world of manufactur-

ing into the classroom.

Moe said mutual respect and a passion for projects are at the heart of his teaching philosophy. He believes the more a student wants to learn, the more he wants to teach.

He already knows at least one thing about Wilmington — its "fantastic football team."

Moe lives in Plainfield and enjoys 3D modeling and sculpting, as well as 3D CAD for mechanical projects. He also has experience performing quality control on manufactured parts for rockets used in space applications.

Lisa Nobles School counselor

Lisa Nobles joins Wilmington as a school counselor after previously serving one semester as an interim counselor at Lockport East High School.

Nobles graduated from Glenbard East High School in Lombard and attended Lewis University in Romeoville, earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in school counseling. She is also a licensed practicing counselor.

Her first goal is to get to know students and build relationships with colleagues, staff, parents and the community.

Nobles said she

believes every student can succeed when they have someone in their corner who understands where they are coming from. She wants to create a safe and supportive space where students feel heard and confident and are prepared for whatever comes after high school.

Nobles lives in Joliet with her husband, Todd, and their chocolate Labrador, Chip. She enjoys live music and concerts, spending time with nieces and nephews and taking long walks with her husband and dog.

She played piano for more than 10 years, participated in competitive dance — including tap, jazz and ballet — for more than 12 years and worked at Lollapalooza for 10 years.

Taylor Panozzo WHS librarian

Taylor Panozzo joins Wilmington High School as its librarian after spending the past two years working in a public library.

A graduate of Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School, Panozzo attended Kankakee Community College.

She said her goals include increasing student engagement and reading while developing a welcoming environment for

all students.

Panozzo views the high school librarian's role as extending beyond helping students find books. She believes it also involves teaching students how to evaluate information, conduct effective research and think critically about the world around them.

Her goal is to make the library a place where students feel supported, respected and encouraged to explore.

She has four children with her fiancé, Justin, and two dogs, Charlie and Luna. Her interests include reading, puzzles, sewing, kayaking, pickleball and traveling.

And one unusual fact about the new librarian: She has two Highland cows.

Daniel White 7th grade social studies

White begins his first full-time year in the classroom teaching seventh-grade social studies at Wilmington Middle School. He is not entirely new to the school, having worked as a substitute at WMS in the spring of 2026.

White will also serve as the B-team middle school baseball coach.

A Lincoln-Way West High School graduate, White attended the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, where he earned a bachelor's degree in social science education.

White said his goals are to connect with students and staff and show students how interesting the early years of American history can be.

His teaching philosophy focuses on learning history visually. White believes that seeing actual photographs and tangible pieces of history can give students a deeper understanding of events and why they matter.

He lives in Manhattan and enjoys the outdoors, fishing, hunting, camping and traveling. He is a Chicago Cubs and Green Bay Packers fan and also enjoys snowmobiling.

He played college football and spends time on multiple fishing trips during the summer.