



THE AMERICAN LEGION Riders guide Remington Thomas home on Thursday after she graduated from basic training with the Navy. Neighbors and volunteers formed a flag line in the final block leading up to her Wilmington home.

Photo by Eric Fisher

A hero’s welcome home

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

After nine weeks of Navy basic training, Remington “Remi” Thomas probably thought she knew something about marching in formation and military ceremony.

What the recent Wilmington High School graduate wasn’t prepared for was the formation waiting for her when she came home.

Thomas received a hero’s welcome Thursday afternoon as Wilmington emergency vehicles, members of American Legion Post 191 Riders and flag-waving residents escorted the new sailor through town and home to Willida Street.

Thomas and her parents, Kelly and Chuck Thomas, arrived at the north end of Wilmington around 2 p.m., where an escort of emergency vehicles and 10 motorcycles from the

Legion Riders were waiting. With lights flashing and motorcycles in formation, the procession traveled through the community.

The welcome became even more personal when her father turned off Sunset Drive for the final block to the family’s Willida Street home.

Waiting along both sides of the street were volunteers holding American flags, creating a patriotic corridor for Thomas to pass through on the final few yards of her journey home.

For the young sailor, suddenly finding herself the center of so much attention was a little overwhelming.

She described herself as excited, but admitted there was also an “oh my God” feeling when she realized everyone was looking at her.

The homecoming marked the end of one chapter and the begin-

ning of another for Thomas, who graduated from Wilmington High School on May 15 and headed almost immediately into military life. She left for Navy Recruit Training Command at Great Lakes Naval Station in North Chicago.

Basic training lasted nine weeks, with the first week devoted primarily to processing and the following eight weeks to training.

Thomas summed up the experience simply.

“It was fun. Okay, I guess,” she said.

There was certainly little time to be bored.

Thomas said recruits spent plenty of time marching across the sprawling Great Lakes base as they moved between training locations. Swimming, firefighting and medical requirements were among the activities that could take them from one

SEE WELCOME HOME PAGE 2



WILMINGTON SAILOR Remington Thomas (center) is surrounded by family, friends, volunteers and members from the American Legion riders on Thursday. A large American Flag was suspended in a tree in the front yard of her home.

Photo by Eric Fisher



REAL OR PROP? At first glance, the \$10 bill at bottom looks much like the genuine bill above it. Tim Andrews of Wilmington said his wife unknowingly received the bottom bill as change while shopping at a dollar store. A closer look reveals the words “For Motion Picture Purposes,” along with other differences.

Prop money passes for the real thing

Wilmington man urges shoppers, clerks to take a closer look

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

Tim Andrews said at his age he doesn’t need to learn any more life lessons.

But after a recent quick trip to the store, he is sharing his story so that other

people don’t end up being short changed like he and his wife did.

It was a Sunday and the Wilmington couple needed a few things from the store, so they stopped at a local dollar store. Andrews’ wife told him it was just a short list and she wouldn’t be long if he wanted to sit in the car.

As he waited, Andrews noticed it was a busy place for a Sunday. It wasn’t long before his wife came walking out with a couple of

SEE PROP MONEY PAGE 2

Family soaked with \$4,000 water bill

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

Jodi Anderson has always considered herself a responsible woman. She even uses auto-pay to cover her monthly water bill. Had she not noticed the \$4,000 water bill just before the money was yanked, her bank account would have taken quite a big hit.

Anderson is frugal. She showers, washes clothes and dishes. She flushes regularly. She may water the petunias and fill the bird bath upon occasion.

It’s even possible that she may have accidentally

left the water running in the kitchen sink, resulting in a mess, but certainly NOT a \$4,000 mess.

What she apparently does not do is operate a small water park for six pampered pooches, which “Big Brother” claims are an integral part of the Anderson household.

Nor does she own an Olympic size pool.

Yet somewhere in the City of Wilmington’s annals, Anderson’s house-

SEE WATER BILL PAGE 2



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Welcome home, continued from page 1

part of the base to another. Live-fire training was spread across three days, while firefighting instruction also took place over several days and was followed later by an assessment. Thomas had an additional responsibility during basic training as a member of a performance division. She participated in the final three graduation ceremonies leading up to her own, spending considerable time at the drill hall practicing and performing.

"We did a lot of marching," she said, noting that her division also practiced cadences and traveled frequently across the base.

One of the most significant moments came Monday morning when Thomas and her fellow recruits completed Battle Stations, the culminating event of Navy boot camp.

For Thomas, that was the

moment everything she had worked toward became official.

"That's when I like officially became a sailor," she said.

Thursday's homecoming gave her a short opportunity to enjoy that accomplishment with family, friends and her hometown before the Navy calls again.

Thomas was scheduled to return to Great Lakes Friday night and leave Saturday for Virginia, where she will begin "A" school, the Navy's technical training for her rating.

Thomas said she is an IS, or intelligence specialist. Her initial schooling will teach the fundamentals of that work before she advances to "C" school for more specialized instruction.

Her A school is expected to continue through Dec. 17. Afterward, Thomas expects to attend approxi-

mately three additional months of C school.

Where the Navy ultimately takes her remains to be seen.

Thomas has a six-year commitment ahead of her and said her parents already predict she could make the Navy a career. She isn't ready to make that prediction herself. If she remains in the service, she hopes to advance through the ranks. If she leaves after her enlistment, she hopes the experience and intelligence training will lead to a career with the federal government.

Those decisions are still years away.

For now, Thomas has accomplished something much more immediate: The Wilmington High School graduate who left home as a Navy recruit came back Thursday as a United States sailor.

Water bill, continued from page 1

hold has been over-indulging in water.

According to her most recent bill, Anderson used nearly 200,000 gallons of water, resulting in charges approaching \$4,000.

Spish Splash

To be clear, Anderson doesn't own six dogs, an Olympic size pool, or a water park.

"I'm just saying, it's a lot of water," Anderson told city officials last week.

Anderson said the bill indicates the massive water usage had been accumulating over a period of months, with readings dating back to October 2025.

To cover all bases, Anderson called in a plumber to make sure there wasn't a cave, complete with spelunkers, under the house.

"I was terrified that 200,000 gallons is somewhere underneath the house," Anderson said.

The plumber explored the underbelly of the house and found no leak.

"There was no water under the house," Anderson reported.

Determined to solve the mystery, Anderson turned to recordings on Ring cameras.

Cameras cover the entire property, which she said would provide compelling evidence if six dogs and a giant swimming pool had suddenly materialized.

"I have Ring cameras all around my house," she said. "So you can see the kiddie pool and six dogs that I supposedly have, that aren't there."

Anderson admits to owning two dogs, and the kiddie pool holds a few gallons of water to cool them off.

Cheater meter

She said she has records showing multiple appointments involving the water meter and equipment, including dates in April, June, and August. She also said she believes several meters may have been swapped out over a relatively short period.

"I suppose we had three meters in 16 months," she said.

At this point, Anderson finds herself with a \$4,000 water bill, six imaginary dogs, an underground cave system, and enough Ring-camera footage to make a pretty convincing episode of "CSI: Wilmington Water Woes."

She also had a very legitimate question: How does a bill get that far out of the ordinary without somebody noticing.

Prop money, continued from page 1

sacks in one hand and her receipt and change in the other.

Nothing seemed unusual until the following day, when they took a closer look at the bills she had received.

One of the \$10 bills looked peculiar.

At first glance, it appeared to be genuine currency. It featured Alexander Hamilton, the familiar green-and-black coloring, a torch and the words "We the People."

But a closer inspection revealed some important differences.

Across the top, where a genuine bill reads "The United States of America," the Andrews' bill plainly stated: "For Motion Picture Purposes."

Andrews pulled a legitimate \$10 bill from his wallet and placed the two side-by-side. That's when he spotted several other differences in the emblems, wording and fine print.

What his wife had received wasn't money at all. It was a prop bill designed to resemble U.S. currency for use in movies or other productions.

"I don't think it was intentional that the clerk handed out a fake \$10 bill," Andrews said. "They are busy and it looked so real they probably didn't even know it had been handed to them."

"Still, shouldn't they be more aware of looking over each bill before they accept it?"

Andrews took the bill to the Wilmington Police Department and spoke with an officer. He said he was told there was nothing police could do about the couple's loss.

He also stopped at a bank to ask whether employees had seen similar prop money circulating locally. Andrews said he was told the bank had heard about fake or prop \$100 bills being passed, but not the smaller \$10 denomination.

For Andrews and his wife, who live on a fixed income, the discovery meant they were simply out \$10.

But Andrews believes their experience should serve as a warning, especially because the prop bill

can look convincing when mixed among legitimate currency and exchanged during a busy transaction.

"There needs to be a public awareness campaign to be on the lookout for these prop bills," Andrews said during a visit to the local newspaper office. "People need to check their change before leaving a store and clerks should check their bills before accepting them."

His advice is simple: Don't assume a bill is genuine just because it looks familiar at first glance.

Taking a few extra seconds to inspect the money going into — or coming out of — a cash register could prevent someone else from learning the same \$10 lesson.

The \$1 million Lotto winner

A Braidwood resident's birthday celebration became a million-dollar milestone after he won a \$1 million Lotto jackpot from a lottery ticket gifted to him by a friend at his birthday party.

The winning ticket was purchased at Gas N Wash, 1951 E. Laraway Rd. in New Lenox, and given to him as a birthday gift.

"My wife planned a party for my big day," said the winner, who opted to remain anonymous. "One of my friends handed me an envelope with some scratch-offs inside. I never would've imagined actually winning."

The ticket matched all six numbers -- 11-17-22-26-36-45 -- in the Saturday, August 8, Lotto Million 2 drawing, securing the \$1 million prize. The ticket also won an additional \$2 for matching two numbers on another line.

"I didn't even think I



A BRAIDWOOD RESIDENT is celebrating a special birthday after winning a \$1 million Lotto jackpot from a lottery ticket gifted by a friend.

Meents Law P.C. files Short estate claim

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WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
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NO. 2026 PR 442
CLAIM NOTICE
Notice is given of the death of
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on August 20, 2026, to Mattie Fielder,
whose address is 1319 Glenwood
Avenue, Joliet, Illinois 60435; whose
attorney is Meents Law, P.C., 25158
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Channahon, Illinois 60410. Claims
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before March 4, 2027, or if mailing or
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Mattie Fielder
Independent Administrator
of the Estate of ELEX SHORT,
Deceased
Marilyn L Wysocki
Meents Law, P.C.
1861 Black Road
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Telephone: (815) 534-9515
Facsimile: (815) 534-9516
Attorney Code: 06198698
Email: MLWysocki@MeentsLaw.com
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16, 2026.

won anything at first glance," he said. "I had one of my friends check the ticket. He must've also overlooked it, because he said I only won a grand."

The winner added, "I thought, 'Wow, a thousand bucks isn't bad, this was a great day.' But I was not prepared for what came next."

When the winner and his wife visited their local Illinois Lottery prize center, they received a life-changing surprise.

"We told the staff that I won a thousand dollars," he said. "One of the workers smiled and said 'Sir, you actually won a million dollars.' I was in complete shock. My wife even started tearing up."

After a few phone calls,

the news quickly spread throughout the family.

"Both my son-in-law and eldest daughter said, 'Get out of here, are you sure?'" he recalled with a laugh. "I told them, 'As sure as I am a year older.'"

Now, the winner and his wife are looking forward to celebrating their good fortune with their family. They plan to take their annual winter trip to Florida to visit relatives, and he hopes to purchase a new car and golf cart.

"We'll be going on a cruise to celebrate our 40th anniversary and my kids' birthdays," he said with a smile. "I told them 'Dad's paying.'"

WE-PTO selling mums

The Wilmington school WE-PTO is taking pre-orders at the Wilmington Downtown Farmers Market on Thursday, Sept 17, from 5-8 pm for garden mums to be sold as a fundraiser for school activities.

They come in six different colors: orange, pink, red, yellow, purple and white. They are 16-18 inches in diameter inside a 9 in pot. Prices will be one for \$12, three for \$33 or five for \$50.

As a result of selling the winning ticket, Gas N Wash will receive a \$10,000 selling bonus -- one percent of the total prize amount.

So far in 2026, Illinois Lottery players have claimed more than 4.1 million winning Lotto tickets, with total prizes exceeding \$47 million.

Lotto is an Illinois-only game that is played three times a week on Monday, Thursday and Saturday. Tickets for the game can be purchased in-store, online, or on the Illinois Lottery app.

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher

The Island City, a history of our namesake

Since time immemorial the Island has been the host of many people, chiefly because at that spot on the Kankakee river was shallow enough for fording, even on foot. What is now a mill race with a dam, was just a small stream that circled the Island then returned to the river. There are many such places up and down the Kankakee.



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

When settlers first came, the Island was covered in vegetation, much of which was wild grapes. Folks came from all around to harvest them for jams, jellies and of course wine. We read in 1862, "Our thanks are due Mr. H. Gardner for a bottle of native wine, manufactured last fall. It is of beautiful color, and most excellent flavor. The grapes of which it is composed were gathered in the immediate vicinity of the village, and we learn are abundant in this part of the State. Mr. G. made forty gallons two years ago, and eighty gallons last fall."

The Island was surveyed and cut into lots, some of them called water lots. At the time it was called Alden's Island, after the first owner, and developer. The water lots were on the river, and could presumably use the water to turn machinery in factories. Of course, at the time all the water in the Kankakee and Iroquois Rivers were owned by a private company headed up by Peter Stewart.

The small stream on the east side of the island was turned into a channel deep enough to turn a water wheel. A flour mill was one of the first businesses to use that water power. And, as we have discussed, the "Paper Mill" site was developed.

Eventually most of the small under brush was cleaned out. Picnics on the Island were a regular summer event, some picnickers coming all the way from Chicago and Kankakee. In 1880 the 4th of July celebration was held there. "On the arrival of the chief speakers on the 12 o'clock train, the procession was formed and paraded the principal streets, its chief attraction being the military companies from Chicago preceded by their excellent band."

"During the day the little steamer made frequent trips up and down the river, loaded with excursionists, and dancing and music was the order of the day. At five o'clock an exhibition of the fire department was held. A building constructed for the purpose on the island was set on fire, and after being completely enveloped in flames fed by kerosene, the fire was completely extinguished in a few minutes, although all the bystanders confidently predicted its destruction before the fire company could be brought to action."

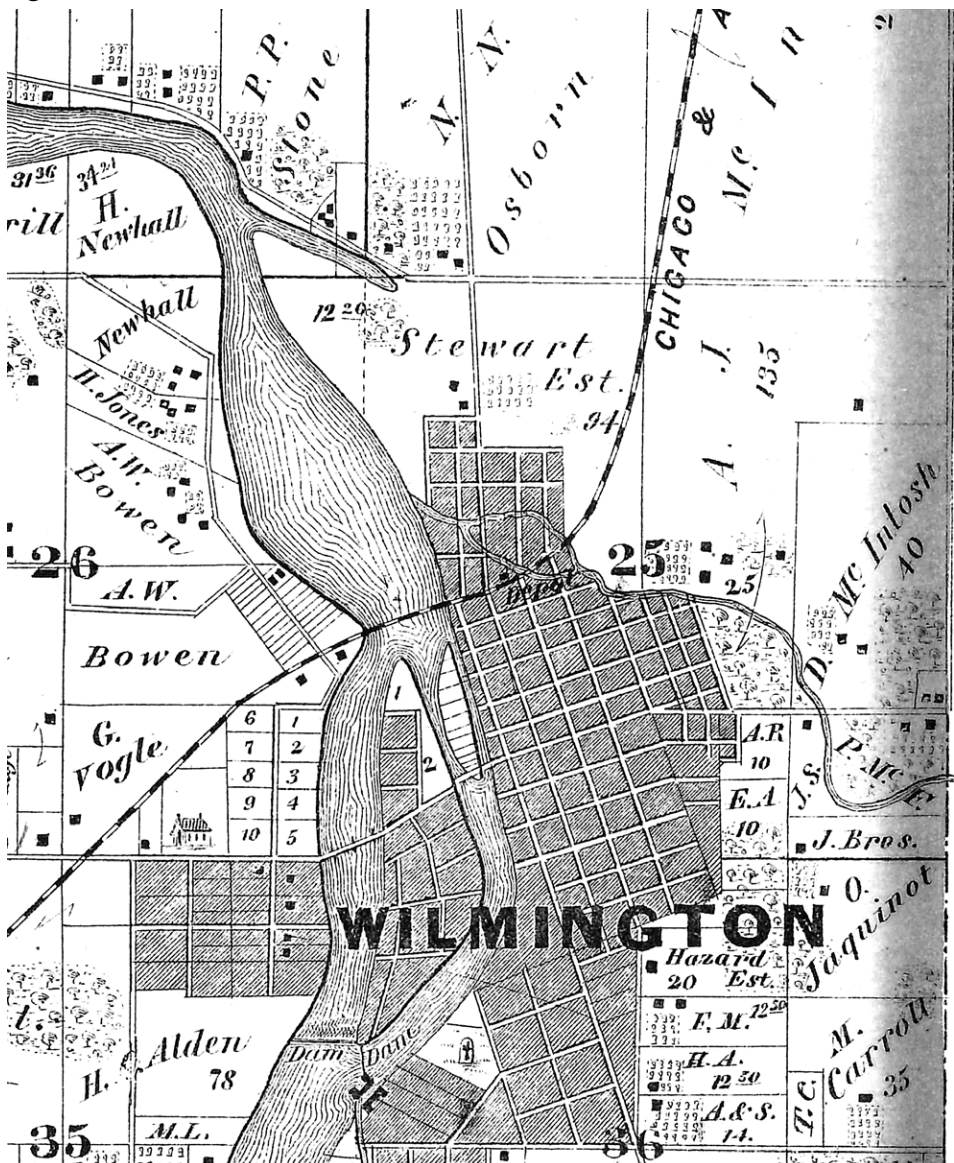
In 1877 the Island was made into a sort of refugee camp. The miners of Braidwood were striking, the company brought in strike breakers called "black legs". Most of those strike breakers were black and in July an angry mob of miners drove all of the

newly arrived black strike breakers out of town; out on to the unfamiliar prairie. They had no food, no water and no shelter.

Wilmington citizens set out to find as many as they could, bringing them back to Wilmington, and housing them in tents on the Island. The churches in the city provided them food and whatever else they needed. We read, "The population of our city was increased on yesterday by the arrival of the 368 colored miners from Braidwood. They were chartered on the island and visited by hundreds of our citizens last evening. They will leave as soon as transportation can be procured."

After the turn of the century, tourism to Wilmington and the Island increased dramatically. At that point the city realized the advantage to a public park there. In we read, "For the information of the citizens of Wilmington and the lovers of one of the most beautiful spots in Illinois - the Island - we herewith give the ownership of same as follows: The city owns 73 lots, J. D. Riley 69 lots, the city's streets and alleys, of converted into lots would make 61 lots more, or in all, 134 lots. The city's interests is 60 per cent. Riley's interest 30 _ per cent, and other interests 9 _ per cent. Let our people get busy and secure same."

However, that estimate was wrong. As it turned out, the city only owned 20 percent. We read, "Seeing that the prospects for a park on the island are not very promising would it not be advisable to turn attention to Mud Turtle island just opposite the new bathing beach. What say our "park builders?"



A MAP OF Wilmington in 1873. It shows lots marked off on the Island.

No more land was acquired, but the land the city did own was becoming quite an attraction, especially at the "bowery." From 1916, "The "bowery" seems to be a drawing card, there being a thousand people in attendance Wednesday night. The dancing platform space is 58 x 44, and a

roof is now being put on which will enable the promoters to give dances in the day time."

The private land was also being put to good use. "May 7, 1920 - W. H. Carter is having another summer cottage built near his residence on the Island near the wagon bridge. This

makes the fourth cottage he has built in the past few years to accommodate city summer tourists who wish to spend their vacation on the banks of the Kankakee."

We will leave the Island now, but we will visit it again next time.

Coalition rolling out campaigns against substance abuse

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

Residents throughout the Braidwood and Wilmington areas will begin seeing new prevention messages aimed at helping young people make healthy choices and encouraging parents to have meaningful conversations with their children about substance use.

The Braidwood Area Healthy Community Coalition (BAHCC) and the Wilmington Coalition for a Healthy Community (WCHC) have announced the launch of their 2026-2027 substance use prevention communication campaigns. The initiatives address misconceptions about youth substance use, and strengthen prevention efforts in both communities.

"Prevention works best when youth hear consistent messages at home, at school and throughout the community," coalition officials said in the announcement. "Sometimes a student seeing a message at

the right time or a parent starting a conversation because of something they saw may seem small, but those moments matter."

Two campaigns will serve as the centerpiece of the outreach effort: Mic Drop and We Can Chat.

The prevention campaigns are being coordinated locally by Danita Morgan, Community Outreach Coordinator and SMART Recovery Facilitator, and Paula Ekstrom, Program Director for the Wilmington Coalition for a Healthy Community.

The Mic Drop campaign is geared toward middle school students and focuses on vaping and nicotine use. Rather than relying solely on warnings, the campaign seeks to connect with youth by addressing topics that matter most to them, including their health, friendships, independence, activities and future goals.

Campaign organizers say the effort is intended to help students better understand the risks associated

with vaping and e-cigarette use while encouraging them to seek guidance from trusted adults when facing important life decisions. The messaging also emphasizes connections between substance use, mental health and overall well-being.

The We Can Chat campaign focuses on parents and caregivers, recognizing the important role families play in preventing underage alcohol and cannabis use.

The campaign encourages adults to start age-appropriate conversations with their children and teens, communicate clear expectations and build strong relationships through ongoing dialogue.

Organizers note that parents do not need to be experts on every substance-related issue to make a positive impact. Simply starting a conversation and keeping communication open can help young people make healthier decisions.

As campaign materials begin appearing locally, coalition leaders hope residents will take time to read the messages, discuss them with family members and share them with others.

The communication campaigns are funded in whole or in part by the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, through a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Police vehicles declared surplus property

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

Two aging police vehicles have officially been designated as surplus property, clearing the way for the City of Wilmington to sell, transfer or otherwise dispose of them.

The city council approved action authorizing the department to remove the vehicles from the city's inventory after determining they are no longer needed for municipal operations.

The vehicles identified

as surplus include a 2020 Ford Explorer ST SUV and a 2017 Ford Interceptor SUV. Both vehicles were used in the department's patrol fleet.

Under the resolution, the city may sell the vehicles, transfer them to another governmental agency or unit of government, or dispose of them through other lawful means.

If the cost of selling, transporting or disposing of the vehicles exceeds their value, the resolution allows the city to declare

them worthless and have them junked or demolished.

Illinois law permits municipalities to dispose of personal property that is no longer necessary or useful to city operations once it has been declared surplus by the governing body.

City officials routinely review equipment and fleet assets to determine whether older vehicles should be replaced, sold, or removed from service as part of ongoing fleet management and maintenance efforts.

Lunch at school

Mon., Sept. 14: walking taco, corn, churro donut, mixed fruit, milk

Tue., Sept. 15: bacon cheeseburger, french fries, apple slices/PB, milk

Wed., Sept. 16: chicken patty on bun, broccoli cheese rice, rice krispie

treat, applesauce, milk

Thu., Sept. 17: chili w/beans, uncrustables, baby carrots, peach cup, milk

Fri., Sept. 18: chicken strips, caesar salad, fresh strawberries, cookie, milk

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Do as we please

BRAIDWOOD— In response to "Nix With the Fireworks." No one from Braidwood wants to be like Naperville besides the transplants that keep moving here from the suburbs. If you want Naperville, move to Naperville. We have a great community here that is rather lax and allows their residence to do as they please.

Golf cart crackdown

BRAIDWOOD— Hopefully the Braidwood Police will start enforcing golf cart laws in this town now that the Braidwood Recreation Club is encouraging their members to break the law with their new golf cart entrance. Nothing like saying that 800 residents who are members will be able to ride their golf carts from their homes into the club using this new entrance. Um, try more like 10 because those who live on the other side of the railroad tracks can not drive the golf carts over the railroad tracks to get to the other side. Apparently the Braidwood Recreation Club feels that the laws don't apply to them or their members. That's why we stopped our membership several years ago. Hopefully the police start writing a bunch of tickets for illegally operating a golf cart on an unauthorized roadway or sidewalk.

Denied justice

WILMINGTON— One more time, a major reason of increased inflation in 2022 was government money given out to Americans frivolously by both Trump and Biden. That furious spending caused supplies of goods to suddenly drop thus prices for existing goods went up accordingly with supply and demand. That's Capitalism, a good thing right? Supplies across the world were depleted and supply chains also were disrupted causing even more price gouging (again Capitalism is good right?) As far as that (Epstein thing) again open investigations by law cannot even be discussed. Of course there are prominent Democrats in those files, investigate immediately, who cares? Investigate all involved in those files. Every party affiliation, every political donor, every friend, acquaintance, Grandfather or Grandmother. Those hundreds of living victims are being denied justice given by law that Trump signed personally last year. That Constitution thing also demands that justice is carried out. But ask yourself why won't he release those unredacted files? You know why, it's the very first reason you just thought of. Children were raped, sodomized and murdered according to already released snippets of these files. This blatant cover-up will never go away, nor should it according to the hard-core Patriots who fervently wave flags for the American way. Right?



EDITOR'S NOTE: Joe Heller's original 9/11 cartoon titled "Liberty Laments" is being reprinted from 25 years ago. This cartoon was drawn and published on Sept. 11, 2001, and reflects the sorrow still felt even to this day. Readers responded requesting copies of this cartoon. Heller's newspaper printed 10,000 copies and raised over \$100,000 for the Sept. 11 victims fund through the Red Cross.

Stop the heckling

BRAIDWOOD—Those associated with the previous city administration just need to stop heckling our current city officials. We keep seeing time and time again that the former city administrator and former finance commissioner throwing jabs at the current council members just to be a thorn in their side. Watching city council meetings online and seeing the comments from the same three or four hecklers just makes you shake your head. The only two civilized members of the previous administration are the former Mayor and former public safety commissioner.

The narcissist

WILMINGTON—How do you like your gas prices, your food prices? So it's not a war in Iran, so what is it? Now we have Lake America, coins with Trump face (be sure to order yours). Trump needs the money, (ha, ha) he's destroyed the White House, what's next, maybe Mount

Rushmore, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon; no end to this narcissist! Hope you Trumpers are happy; Canada and the rest of the world hates us.

Against data centers

COAL CITY—I'm calling about the data center. The average between 72 and 75 percent of all Americans do not want a data center in their vicinity. Why is it that our mayor and our trustees of which I just read in the paper all want a raise. So why do we want to be stuck with this? Nobody else wants it. If 72 and 75 percent of all Americans in the whole United States don't want it, why should we get it? Nobody else wants it. And our house values are going to be depreciated.

I know why

SHADOW LAKES— This generation of young children are not as smart as the last generation. Which up to now previous generations were always more intelligent and smarter with more common sense

then previous generations, until now. I think I know why, if you would like to know my answer, send it in the Sound Off column and I will tell you. Dan Hill

Ignored the park

WILMINGTON—So the governor comes to town to visit the Gemini Giant (clever headline by the way). What I want to know is did Pritzker take the time to drive through the park and see all the damage from the tornado? He was right there and the park road was blocked off. I bet he didn't because he is too busy campaigning with all his wealth. The man is not in touch with Illinois communities and its people.

Run by liberals

DIAMOND—Watching an ad on channel 9 about Darren Bailey being too extreme for Illinois people. Well he is too extreme because the state is run by liberal Democrats. I believe in Darren Bailey.

Diesel price hits record high

The national average price of diesel has reached a new all-time record high of \$5.85 per gallon, continuing to climb and surpassing the previous record of \$5.82 per gallon set in June 2022, according to GasBuddy, North America's fuel savings platform.

While gasoline prices often dominate headlines, diesel can have a much broader impact on inflation and business costs. Diesel powers much of the U.S. economy, including freight trucks, trains, agricultural equipment, and construction machinery.

As diesel prices rise, transportation costs increase, often leading to higher prices for consumer goods and services.

According to GasBuddy data, more than 515,000 unique users reported fuel prices in August 2026 alone, contributing to one of North America's most comprehensive real-time fuel price datasets and reflecting the scale of GasBuddy's highly engaged consumer driver community.

"Diesel is the fuel that moves the economy, and when diesel prices reach record levels, the impact extends far beyond the transportation sector," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. "Higher diesel prices impact consumers as rising supply chain costs increase the price of groceries, household goods, deliveries, and countless other products Americans rely on every day."

Diesel prices have climbed sharply in recent months as geopolitical tensions and supply chain disruptions continue to drive volatility in global energy markets. Higher oil prices, reduced refining capacity abroad, and tight global inventories have all contributed to rising diesel and gasoline prices. As a result, diesel prices are up over \$2/gal from a year ago (September 2025: \$3.70/gal diesel).

The average price of unleaded gas over the Labor Day weekend was \$4.29 per gallon. In Wilmington, gas prices ranged from \$3.94/g at Circle K to \$4.04/g at Shell.

In Braidwood, gas was \$4.19/g at Casey's up to \$4.24/g at Marathon. In Coal City, gas will cost you \$4.49/g across the board.

Morris is charging anywhere from \$3.99/g at Citgo to \$4.07/g at Shell.

Bourbonnais Gulf is charging \$3.96/g while Gas N Wash is at \$4.15/g.

Full shutdown of I-55 planned over two nights

A full closure will be required in both directions of I-55 at I-80 over two consecutive nights beginning, Wednesday, Sept. 9. The closures are necessary to safely install new steel beams on the I-80 bridge over the expressway.

Wednesday, Sept. 9

Starting at 8 p.m., westbound I-80 will be reduced to one lane between Houbolt Road and I-55.

At 9 p.m., northbound and southbound I-55 will be reduced to one lane between Illinois 59 and U.S. 6.

At 11 p.m., the eastbound I-80 ramp to northbound I-55 will close.

Between midnight and 5 a.m., northbound I-55 will be fully closed at I-80.

A detour will direct northbound I-55 traffic to exit at eastbound I-80 to northbound Houbolt Road and reenter westbound I-80 to access northbound I-55.

One lane on northbound and southbound I-55 will reopen by 5 a.m., with all lanes and ramps open by 6 a.m. Thursday.

Thursday, Sept. 10

Starting at 8 p.m., westbound I-80 will be reduced to one lane between Houbolt Road and I-55.

At 9 p.m., northbound and southbound I-55 will be reduced

to one lane between Illinois 59 and U.S. 6.

Between midnight and 5 a.m., southbound I-55 will be fully closed at I-80.

During that time, a detour will direct southbound I-55 traffic to exit at westbound I-80 to southbound Ridge Road and reenter eastbound I-80 to access southbound I-55.

All lanes and ramps will reopen by 6 a.m. Friday.

As the I-80 reconstruction continues, the public should continue to expect lane shifts, overnight lane closures and significant delays and allow extra time for trips through this area.

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Photo by Flotsam River Circus

FLOTSAM RIVER CIRCUS will perform on Monday, Sept. 14, at McKinley Woods – Kerry Sheridan Grove in Channahon. The free performance is for all ages.

Flotsam River Circus drops anchor at Forest Preserve District's McKinley Woods for free performance

The Flotsam River Circus will bring its aerial acrobatics, circus acts, songs and silliness to McKinley Woods Kerry Sheridan Grove on Monday, Sept. 14.

The outdoor entertainment troupe will perform on the shore of the Des Plaines River behind Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

The free, all-ages event will take place from 5-7 p.m. in partnership with the Channahon Park District.

The theme of the per-

formance is what happens when the world goes awry and mutant fish take over. Flotsam River Circus is a 501 nonprofit organization with the goal of spreading whimsy, wonder and a spirit of possibility.

When Flotsam River Circus contacted the Forest Preserve District about performing on the river at the preserve, it was a unique opportunity that was hard to pass up, said Jerome Gabriel, facility supervisor at Four Rivers.

"The Flotsam River Circus is a non-profit organization that seeks to

bring awareness to the nation's local waterways through art and performance," he said. "Being a preserve that is completely surrounded by water and on a working river, we felt it was important for people to come out to celebrate our local waterways and all they offer."

DBLdaws Food Truck will be serving food from 5-8 p.m. Plan to bring camp chairs or blankets to sit on during the performance, which begins at 6 p.m.

"I hope that families find a relaxing and fun evening along the riverbanks while gaining an appreciation of what the water brings to our local community," Gabriel said.

Flotsam River Circus is a troupe of musicians, circus performers and puppeteers who travel on a ramshackle raft giving free performances in waterfront towns. Since 2019, the troupe has covered nearly 3,000 miles of river, performing in 15 different states.

"Our tours have taken us down many rivers, including the Sacramento, the Ohio, and the Mississippi," the Flotsam website states. "In 2025, we traveled from Buffalo to New York City to help celebrate the bicentennial of the Erie Canal. This year, we are traveling up the Illinois Waterway from St. Louis to Chicago. In future years, we hope to bring our floating circus to the rivers and canals of Europe – and eventually all over the world."

Chapter to meet

Chapter GK PEO will have their monthly meeting on Monday, Sept. 14, at the home of Vicky Weidling. Program for the evening will be on Wilmington history.

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Learn how to understand your DNA matches, explore your family history, and use your results to make meaningful genealogical discoveries.

Whether you are just getting started or looking to get more from your DNA test, this presentation will help you take the next

step with confidence.

It will be presented by Michelle Wilson, an experienced genetic genealogist and educator known for making complex DNA concepts easy to understand.

Attend the program Saturday, Sept. 12, at 1 p.m. at the Wilmington Public Library District. Sign up to register by stopping by the library, 201 S. Kankakee St. or calling 815-476-2834.

Garden Club annual membership tea, birthday

The Wilmington Garden Club will have its annual Membership Tea and celebrate its 90th birthday on Wednesday, Sept. 16.

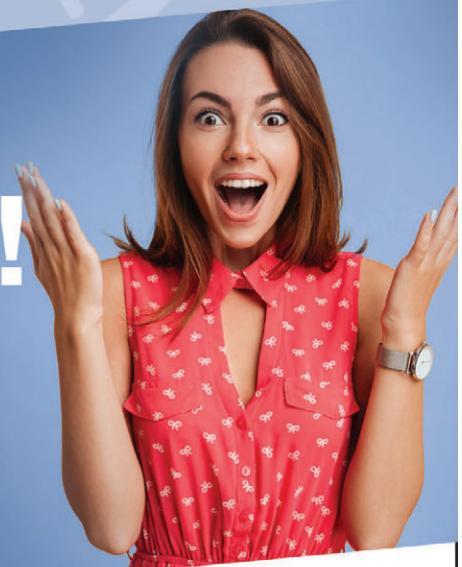
The club's meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m. at the Wilmington Park District 315 N. Water St. If you have an interest in gardening become a member and bring a friend.

For more information call Judy at 815-258-8450.

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OBITUARIES

Nick Cook

COAL CITY—Nick Cook, 21, of Coal City, passed away unexpectedly on Monday, Aug. 31, 2026.

Born April 21, 2005, in Joliet, Nicholas Wesley was the son of Andrew and Julie (Drager) Cook. He was raised in Coal City, attended Immaculate Conception School in Morris, and graduated from Coal City High School with the class of 2023. At the time of his passing, Nick was employed as an Operator with ExxonMobil.

Active and athletic throughout his life, Nick enjoyed a variety of sports and was always willing to try something new. He played basketball at both Immaculate Conception School and Coal City High School, participated in cross country during his grammar school years, was a member of the swim team, and especially enjoyed snowboarding.

Away from sports, Nick found happiness in many of life's simple pleasures. He enjoyed video gaming with his buddies, had an impressive enthusiasm for collecting Mountain Dew memorabilia, and loved being on or around the water, particularly spending time in the lake. Animals also held a special place in Nick's heart. From raising chickens and feeding ducks as a boy to the companionship he shared with his beloved dog, Zofie, his gentle nature was evident in the way he cared for them.

Those who knew Nick will remember him most for the kind and thoughtful person he was. He had a quiet determination and rarely allowed an obstacle to keep him from moving forward. Though he never sought the spotlight, Nick possessed an easy way with people and could strike up a conversation with just about anyone. He was genuine, approachable, and a friend to all, with a sincere belief that people should simply love and care for one another.

Nick could be careful and frugal when it came to himself, yet remarkably generous when it came to others. Beneath his quiet and sometimes complex nature was a young man who valued uncomplicated

things: time with the people he loved, his friends, his animals, the lake, and simply enjoying life as it came.

Above all, Nick cherished his parents and his family. They were at the center of his world, and the love he shared with them was immeasurable. In only 21 years, Nick touched countless lives through kindness rather than attention, friendship rather than recognition, and a gentle spirit that made people feel comfortable simply being themselves.

His life was far too brief, but the goodness with which Nick lived it, and his simple hope that everyone would love one another, will remain a lasting part of all who knew and loved him.

Survivors include his parents, Andrew and Julie; sister, Emma Cook; maternal grandparents: Gam'me – Henrietta Drager, Jerry and Jan Parker and Kathy Kennealy; paternal grandfather, Jerry (Cathy) Cook, and numerous aunts, uncles and cousins, as well as a host of friends.

Nick was preceded in death by his Papa Ray – Raymond Drager and paternal grandparents: Sue (Randy) Majdich.

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 Friday, Sept. 4, 2026 between the hours of 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. A private family funeral services will follow and cremation rites will be accorded.

Preferred memorial may be made as gifts in Nick's memory to Shriner's Childrens Hospital Chicago, 2211 N Oak Park Ave, Chicago, IL 60707.

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

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



Patrick McNulty



WILMINGTON—Patrick Joseph McNulty, 80, of Wilmington, passed away on Aug. 11, 2026, at Saint Joseph Medical Center in Joliet.

Patrick was born in Chicago, on Oct. 31, 1945, to his parents, Joseph and Veronica McNulty. He was a dedicated union pipefitter who spent many years working diligently and making lifelong friends along the way. Patrick also spent time in Vietnam, serving in the Army.

Amongst his other passions was his love of helping people. He has literally given the shirt off his back, and worked on countless home projects. A more loyal friend you will never find. Those who knew him will remember his generous spirit and comical presence.

One of the last things Patrick said was, "I love everybody." Although he usually



delivered that message as a prank, that sentiment was well known to all who knew and loved him. It was simply who Patrick was. He cared about people and usually found a way to make them laugh. He will be sorely missed by his family, friends, neighbors, and all those fortunate enough to have known him.

He is survived by his two children: Erin and Megan; his four grandchildren: Bodhi, Sam, Maeko, and Lily; his two sisters, Leigh and Maripat.

A celebration of life service will be held at the Moose Lodge in Wilmington, IL at 32050 W. River Road on Nov. 1, 2026 at 2pm.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to Ronald McDonald House Charities.

Carol Morin

COAL CITY—Carol Morin, 85, of Coal City, passed away peacefully on Sunday, Sept. 6, 2026 at her home.

Born Dec. 6, 1940 in Joliet, Carol Ann was a daughter of Ervin and Jenny (Small) Phillips. She was raised and educated in Wilmington, and graduated from Wilmington High School with the class of 1958. Carol raised her two children in Coal City and was proud to see her family flourish by growing to include her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was happiest when she was able to spend time in her yard, tending to her garden, watching her flowers grow and being with her canine companion, Sailor. Carol will be missed deeply by those she loved and those who loved her.

Survivors include her son, Lenny (Carrie) Onsen, of Coal City; three grandchildren: Tiger (Jen) Onsen and Cody Onsen, both of Coal City, and Tony (Rose) Francisco, of Roselle, IL; two great-grandchildren: Griffin Onsen and New Baby Boy Onsen expected any day; one sister, Mary

(the late John) Manietta, of Coal City and many nieces and nephews.

Carol was preceded in death by her parents; the father of her children, Leonard "Swede" Onsen; her daughter, Tammy Francisco, and two sisters: Marilyn (Gerald) Krell and Joan Schumacher.

Private family services will be held at Braceville Gardner Cemetery where Carol will be laid to rest with Swede.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Carol's memory to Lightways Hospice and Serious Illness Care, 250 Water Stone Circle, Joliet, IL 60431.

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

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



Lucille DeGulie

COAL CITY—Lucille DeGulie, 102, of Coal City. The Lord claimed His servant, Lucille Plese DeGulie on Wednesday morning, Sept. 2, 2026.

Lucille was born the second child of John and Margaret (Berta) Plese on April 15, 1924. She always felt blest to have been born on the farm located on the beautiful Kankakee River and all the pleasures, events, and friendships that blest her early years there.

Lucille attended Johnson School, a one-room country grade school, enjoyed her years at Reed Custer High School, and received B.A. and Masters Degrees from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana.

Lucille was proud of and deeply grateful to her parents for their strong mantle of parental guidance which created a respectful family love, a sound work ethic and a deep Catholic faith. She loved, appreciated and relished her six siblings; they were gifts.

Lucille's life was enriched by her teaching profession. She enjoyed the interaction with many young people and treasured all the friendships gained from that profession.

Lucille is survived by her beloved sisters Madonna Orr and Margaret Paoletti, and many loving nieces, nephews and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her beloved husband, Joseph DeGulie in 2019, and by her loving siblings and their spouses: Jim and Donita Plese, Marilyn and James Tyler, Leo and Ceil Plese, Dean and Judy Plese; brothers-in-law: Jack Orr and Albert Paoletti; sister-in-

law and brother-in-law, Freda and Ghlee Blair. She was also preceded by her beloved nieces: Clare Gaaney, Suzy Rhodes, Debbie Plese, and Jacqui Rilea; nephews: Tony Plese, Dean Plese Jr. and Greg Dennis and great-nephew and great-nieces: Joey Tyler, Margaret Rice and Lena Mogler.

There will be no visitation, but family and friends are invited to a Mass of Christian Burial on Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church, 604 S. Kankakee Street in Wilmington. Rev. Thomas Logue will preside and her nephews, Deacon Jay Plese and Deacon Michael Plese will assist.

For those who wish to participate, the Holy Rosary will be recited one half hour before Mass.

Lucille was an active member of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Coal City where she cherished her membership, but per her wishes, Mass will be celebrated at St. Rose of Lima Church in Wilmington where she wanted to receive her final Mass of Christian Burial, having celebrated all her previous Sacraments at St. Rose.

Per Lucille's request, please no memorials. Just light a candle and say a prayer for Lucille's soul.

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



Betty Roberts

COAL CITY—Betty Davidson Roberts, age 90, of Coal City, most recently a resident of The Gardens at Park Pointe in Morris, passed away on Sept. 1, 2026 at Morris Hospital.

Betty was born March 6, 1936, in Harriman, TN, to Charles and Alice (Ladd) Davidson. Though she made Illinois her home, she never lost the Southern roots that were an important part of who she was.

Betty was a devoted member of the Braceville United Methodist Church and spent many years volunteering at Morris Hospital. Having once been a caregiver herself, she understood the importance of helping others and giving of her time.

Strong-willed and fiercely independent, Betty was determined to do things her own way and remain independent for as long as possible. Her family often joked that her stubborn streak was probably a big reason she made it to 90. She was never afraid to speak her mind and always had an opinion to share.

Betty was also a wonderful Southern cook. She loved her recipes and cookbooks and took great pride in passing along her cooking knowledge and traditions to her family. Her kitchen was one of the many places where she showed her love.

Above all, Betty loved her family. She

is survived by her daughter, Katherine Rose, and daughter-in-law, Pam Roberts; her grandchildren: Adam and Kristi Roberts of Coal City; Michelle Reddinger and Derrick "D" Wren of Morris; Alan and Jessica Gabehart, Matt Gabehart and Katie Gabehart; her great-grandchildren: Zachary Reddinger, Samuel Reddinger, Caleb Reddinger, Haidyn Wren, Cooper Roberts, Zoe Roberts, and Keirsten, Kamden and Darcie Gabehart.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Charles and Alice Davidson; her husband, Joe Roberts; her son, Quintin Keith Roberts; and several brothers and sisters.

Memorial contributions in Betty's name may be made to the Braceville United Methodist Church.

Betty leaves behind a legacy of faith, strength, independence, family traditions, and love. Her family will miss her humor, her strong opinions, her cooking advice, and the unmistakable way she was simply Betty.

Services will be announced at a later date.

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

Ferrari Funeral Services are entrusted with arrangements.



Midewin NT Prairie opens additional areas to deer and turkey hunting

Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (NTP) in Wilmington is opening additional areas to hunting, starting with the fall 2026 deer hunting season, which begins October 1.

In previous years, hunters were restricted to an assigned zone. Starting with this fall's deer hunting season hunters will no longer register for a zone with each visit but will have access to approximately 17,000 acres that are open to the public. Maps of the new areas will be available at the Welcome Center located on Illinois 53 just north of Wilmington.

While the amount of land available to hunters has increased, what hasn't changed is the necessity for hunters to follow all Forest Service and Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) laws and regulations.

"We are happy to expand opportunities for the public to enjoy their public lands," said Robert West, Midewin NTP's Prairie Supervisor. "As with everything we do, safety is our top priority. Opening

that's safe for everyone."

Deer archery season runs from Oct. 1 to Jan. 17 with breaks for firearm deer season Nov. 20-22 and Dec. 3 to 6.

All visitors, including hunters, are reminded to park at trailheads and designated areas without blocking gates or access points. All 30 miles of trails at the prairie are non-motorized, with 22 miles being multi-use for hiking, biking, and horseback riding and eight miles are pedestrian only.

The Wauponsee Glacial Trail, which runs along the eastern edge of Midewin NTP, is controlled by the Will County Forest Preserve which strictly prohibits firearms, bows and hunting on its land.

Midewin trails will remain open through all hunting seasons. Hikers, bikers, and horseback riders are encouraged to stay on the trails to ensure their safety. Hunters are reminded shooting is prohibited within 150 yards of any trail, building, developed recreation site, or occupied area.

Forest Service, IDNR, and Will County Forest Preserve law enforcement

will be patrolling the prairie during hunting seasons to enforce all county, state, and federal regulations.

The work of prairie restoration never stops, and there may be times areas of the prairie are closed to hunting due to prescribed fire or Forest Service operations. Check trailhead bulletin boards or call the Welcome Center to find out about areas that may be temporarily closed.

"We will continue to evaluate our hunting program into 2027," said West. "And we will work closely with IDNR to increase hunting and fishing opportunities that are in line with our restoration goals."

For the full list of Forest Service hunting rules at Midewin NTP visit www.usda.gov/r09/midewin/safety-ethics/hunting-rules-regulations-and-guidelines

More information on hunting in Illinois, to include hunting permits, can be found online at <https://dnr.illinois.gov/hunting>

For questions or tips please contact the U.S. Forest Service Tip Line at 618-201-3364.

Fossil Ridge Library calendar

Adult Programs

Bingocize, 1-2 p.m. Every Tuesday starting Sept. 1. Looking for a fun new way to be more active?

Bingo + Exercise = Bingocize®, a health promotion program that combines the game of bingo with fall prevention exercise. Play bingo with us and meet new people while learning about techniques to reduce falls.

Tween Programs

Monday, Sept. 14- Tween Game night- 5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m. Join us at the library for the ultimate after-school mashup. Test your skills on the highly anticipated Nintendo Switch 2 with open multiplayer gaming, or take a break at our epic Mobile Art Cart loaded with DIY crafting supplies, stickers, and markers. Bring your friends, challenge your rivals, or just kick back and create. Open to students in 4th through 8th grade. Refreshments will be provided. **Registration is required to save your spot.**

Tuesday, Sept. 15 & 22- Community Helpers Storytime (Registration Required) 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. 275 W. Main St, Braidwood, on Sept. 15th. 21750 IL-113, Custer Park, on Sept. 22nd. Join us at the Braidwood Fire Protection District for a tour of the fire station. Meet Sparky, the

fire dog, and listen to stories read by the firefighters. Registration is required, and a caregiver must accompany their child.

Children & Toddler Programs

Wednesday, Sept. 9, 16, 23 & 30- (Registration Required) 10 a.m.-10:45

Little Learner's: Let's learn our ABCs! "Little Learners" is a fun, weekly program where preschoolers can master the alphabet through stories, music, and a craft. Join us as we explore the wonderful world of letters, one week at a time.

Thursday, Sept. 10, 17 & 24- (Registration required) Toddler Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 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 throughout the program.

Listen and Create Storytime 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. This program is specially designed for children aged 3-8. Every week, children can explore new books and engage in a fun craft project. Please make sure to dress in clothes that can get messy, as the craft project will involve getting creative with various art materials.

Saturday, Sept. 12- 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Children's Costume Swap: Halloween is around the corner! Swap out the costumes your children have outgrown for something new. Stop by the library to see what you might be able to find! Costumes should be in good condition. Please make sure the items are freshly washed.

Mum flower fundraiser

The First Presbyterian Church of Braidwood is holding a Fall Mum Flower Sale.

These huge 9 inch pots will be delivered to the church on Wednesday, Sept. 16, and will be ready to bloom beautifully for your fall decorating.

They are \$12 each and are available in orange, yellow, purple, pink, bronze & white.

Call or text LuAnn Bolatto at 815-790-7134, Lora Grant 815-955-9927 or Joyce Bauer at 815-584-7239, by Sept 9 to order.

Plants can hear with no ears

Dear EarthTalk: Can plants actually "hear" pollinators nearby and open up accordingly and can we harness this knowledge to help pollinators and plants thrive?

-- Peter B., Bloomfield, CT



As pollinator populations face steep global declines due to habitat loss, pesticides and climate change, scientists are exploring surprising ways plants may be helping themselves, as well as their insect partners, thrive.

Recent research suggests that some plants may actually be able to detect the sounds of nearby pollinators and respond by boosting nectar production. This discovery opens up new possibilities for agriculture, conservation, and our understanding of how plants interact with the world.

Although plants don't have ears, they can sense vibrations in their environment, including sound waves in the air.

In a 2024 study,



RECENT RESEARCH SUGGESTS that some plants, such as this evening primrose, may actually be able to detect the sounds of nearby pollinators and respond by boosting nectar production.

researchers found that the evening primrose (*Oenothera drummondii*) increased the sugar concentration of its nectar within just three minutes of being exposed to sound frequencies mimicking bee wingbeats. Interestingly, when the flower petals were removed, the response disappeared, suggesting that petals themselves act as acoustic sensors.

This form of "hearing" allows plants to dynamically adjust their offerings based on the likelihood of being visited, effectively making their nectar more appealing to pollinators.

As National Geographic reported, it's a fast and targeted response to a specific ecological cue, and it's now considered one of the most direct examples of plant bioacoustics.

More recent studies suggest that plants can detect and respond to pollinator sounds in surprisingly specific ways. Francesca Barbero, a professor of zoology at the University of Turin, explains that "plants could improve their reproductive success if their responses drive modifications in pollinator behavior."

Additional studies have shown that even some non-flowering plants may respond to mechanical vibrations in their surroundings.

A 2025 report highlighted new evidence that even some non-flowering species respond to mechanical vibrations in their environment.

One 2024 working paper proposed using pollinator sound simulations in greenhouses to trigger nectar production in crops like berries and tomatoes. This offers a potential tool for improving yields without chemicals.

If developed further, such applications could help support pollinators, reduce pesticide use, and optimize crop health naturally. Researchers are thinking about "sound gardens" where speakers mimic pollinator wingbeats to stimulate plants into a more receptive state.

Scientists caution that we don't yet fully understand the mechanisms behind these responses or how consistent they are in real-world environments. Others warn against overstating things, as these are unconscious biochemical responses.

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Operation Firm Handshake plans annual Veterans Picnic

Veterans from across Illinois and their families are invited to Coal City on Saturday, Sept. 12, for a day of food, fellowship and recognition during the 13th annual Operation Firm Handshake Veterans Picnic.

The free event will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 1500 N. Broadway St. at the Coal City Area Club. Organizers bill the gathering as Illinois' largest free veterans picnic, bringing together veterans from all branches of the military, active-duty service members and their families.

Now in its 13th year, Operation Firm Handshake is organized by local Grundy County veterans as a way to recognize those who have served while giving veterans an opportunity to reconnect with old



friends and meet others who share the bond of military service.

A pig roast will serve as the main course, with refreshments also provided throughout the day. Those attending are encouraged to bring their appetites and lawn chairs and settle in for an afternoon of activities.

The picnic will feature door prizes, a 50/50 drawing, entertainment and a

bean bag tournament. Organizers are also planning plenty of activities and entertainment for children, making the gathering an event for the entire family.

Representatives of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Space Force are represented in the event's invitation, emphasizing that veterans of all branches and eras of service are welcome.

The purpose behind Operation Firm Handshake remains much the same as when the picnic began — providing veterans with a place to meet, share stories and receive recognition for their service to the nation.

For additional information or to volunteer, contact Fred Gaddis at (815) 374-0302 or Mary Gaddis at (815) 351-3125.

Electronics dropoff in Wilmington

Will County's next free electronics drop-off event will be held Thursday, Sept. 10, from 5-7 p.m. at the Wilmington City Hall parking lot, 1165 S. Water St.

Participants are reminded to remain in their vehicles, show ID by holding it to the window for staff to see and then allow staff to remove items without assistance from each vehicle.

Items accepted include: Televisions, monitors, printers, computers (desktops, laptops, notebooks, tablets), electronic keyboards, fax machines, videocassette recorders, portable digital music players,

DVD players, DVD recorders, video game consoles, small scale servers, scanners, electronic mice, digital converter boxes, cable receivers, satellite receivers, cell phones, computer cable, portable digital assistants (PDAs) and zip drives.

Electronic items contain materials that can be recycled countless times while other materials in items are considered hazardous.

Scrap metal like pots and pans, baking sheets, car jacks, chains, keys, copper pipe and wire, door knobs silverware and more.



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Hope & Healing Cancer Services, now even closer

Join us Sept. 17 at 9:30 a.m. for our ribbon-cutting and open house at our Morris location, 1515 Creek Dr, Morris, IL 60450.

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port through every stage of your journey, from diagnosis to recovery.

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A Giant adventure Down Under



Photo by Matthew Youell

THE BEES WERE BUZZING with joy during a recent visit by the Gemini Giant to a mesmerizing flowering canola farm in Woomargama, Australia. This Share-A-Shot photo, along with two others, were submitted by Matthew Youell who lives in Australia and has a The Gemini Giant replica from Wilmington. Youell's other photos of the Giant were taken while visiting the giant Magpie statue in Euroa, Australia and the Mary Poppins statue in Bowral. "The giant magpie is named Swoop the Big Barrwarrang to pay tribute to our local Taungurung Aboriginal people – meaning magpie in their language. The Australian magpie is known to swoop on anyone to protect their nest and their yodelling melody," Youell said. "The Mary Poppins statue commemorates author P.L. Travers' magical fairytale, where she conceived the famous folktale as a youth growing up in the town of Bowral." Submit interesting Share-A-Photos by email to freepress604@gmail.com.

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WHS Class of 1957 to hold reunion

Members of the Wilmington High School Class of 1957 are being invited to turn back the clock and spend an afternoon catching up with old friends during an upcoming class reunion.

The reunion will be held Saturday, Sept. 19, from noon to 4 p.m. at Nellie's Restaurant and Old School Brewery, 110 Bridge St. in Wilmington.

Organizers say the gathering will provide classmates with an opportunity to see one another again, renew old friendships and spend a few hours reminiscing about their Wilmington High School days.

A \$15 cover charge will be collected at the door

and includes a meal of pulled pork, Italian beef, baked beans and coleslaw.

The invitation is open to members of the Class of 1957 and their guests. Reunion organizers are also asking classmates to spread the word, particularly to former classmates who may not have received an invitation.

Those planning to attend — as well as those unable to make the reunion — are asked to contact Jim Johnston (815) 476-7572 or email johnstonjames132@yahoo.com, or Marilyn 708-289-5613, so organizers can get an accurate count and confirm current contact information.

Seated Yoga at the Forest Preserve

The Forest Preserve of Will County is hosting Seated Yoga and Seasonal Sights on Sunday, Sept. 13 from 11 a.m. to noon at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.

Take part in a 30- to 35-minute all-levels seated yoga session followed by a 25- to 30-minute exploration of the natural world. Bring water and wear comfortable clothing. Ages 12 or older; free. Register by Sept. 12.

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Legislature needs to question its Inspector General

The legislature needs to question its own Inspector General over allegations made by declared sexual harassment victims. In the past week or so, three women have told stories about their dissatisfaction with the way they were treated by the state's Legislative Inspector General. And it's clear that at least three of the four legislative leaders are quickly becoming fed up with the LIG and that another leader may have trouble sustaining his claim that one of his members was cleared of wrongdoing.

You may have seen the Chicago Tribune story about an unnamed female lobbyist who formally objected to the way she was treated by Legislative Inspector General Michael McCuskey during his sexual harassment probe of now-former Rep. Harry Benton.

The lobbyist sent a letter to the four legislative leaders at the end of July claiming McCuskey had "violated the confidence of other victims and me, broke standard investigative norms, and made inappropriate comments" to her. "Specifically," she wrote, McCuskey "shared the names of the other victims and other confidential information about their cases with me without prompting, among other inappropriate statements and missteps."

The day after that story was published, my associate Isabel Miller reached



Rich Miller

and then served as Rep. Briel's deputy chief of staff. LIG McCuskey ruled that her allegations were "unfounded" and Rep. Briel said the ruling proved everything Jackson said was false and the House Democrats began unapologetically ramping up support for Briel in her second race against Republican Liz Bishop.

Jackson told Isabel that she, too, had experienced some of the same McCuskey behavior as the unnamed lobbyist. McCuskey, she said, "shared other stories from other people and their experiences with [Briel]."

Jackson also said McCuskey claimed Rep. Briel was "crazy." Asked about that, Jackson insisted that McCuskey "verbatim called [Briel] 'crazy' and... was telling me about the things that they were saying on their side in the interviews but he definitely called her crazy to me."

Jackson said McCuskey's stories were "very validating in a sense because it was like he was telling me, 'Here's all these other shared experiences, don't worry.'"

"I don't remember if he did tell me names [of other accusers]," Jackson said. "He spoke about, I think it was like an environmental lobbyist group that

out to Laura Jackson, who claimed she was sexually harassed by Rep. Amy "Murri" Briel (D-Ottawa) and made other allegations, including how drugs were provided to campaign workers.

Jackson worked on Briel's 2024 campaign and then served as Rep. Briel's deputy chief of staff.

LIG McCuskey ruled that her allegations were "unfounded" and Rep. Briel said the ruling proved everything Jackson said was false and the House Democrats began unapologetically ramping up support for Briel in her second race against Republican Liz Bishop.

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"I don't remember if he did tell me names [of other accusers]," Jackson said. "He spoke about, I think it was like an environmental lobbyist group that

had a lot of issues with her, and he told me about that. He shared with me about a story I had already known... about Briel yelling at one of Pritzker's staff openly and just like berating him openly, but I don't think he told me that staff's name."

We reached out to all four legislative leaders and showed them Ms. Jackson's quotes. Three responded.

I asked Senate President Don Harmon's spokesperson whether the Briel LIG investigation should be revisited: "Central to our ethics laws is that victims and witnesses know they will be treated with respect, confidentiality and professionalism in this process. We would encourage the Legislative Ethics Commission to take the appropriate steps to uphold those standards."

The Legislative Ethics Commission is empowered by state law to request further investigation of a case by the Legislative Inspector General.

The commission, which is equally divided between the two parties, also has the power to request an investigation by the Illinois Attorney General.

Asked the same question about whether the Briel LIG investigation should be revisited, House Minority Leader Tony McCombie's spokesperson issued a one-word response: "Yes."

Senate Minority Leader John Curran also weighed in: "Yes, the LEC should reopen the investigation and ensure that all appropriate steps were taken, including referring any criminal activity to the appropriate law enforcement agency."

House Speaker Chris Welch's office did not

respond to a request for comment.

As a matter of policy, the LIG does not respond to news media inquiries about specific details of cases.

And then yet another woman who filed a detailed sexual harassment complaint against a different House Democrat a few years ago sent us a statement corroborating many of the complaints against Legislative Inspector General McCuskey, who also deemed her allegations "unfounded."

"His treatment of victims is unacceptable," she wrote. "The LIG kept telling me he was a federal judge, and that I made him look incompetent and questioned his integrity of investigating... If someone really comes forward with a serious sexual assault or a big case, nobody should have to talk to him."

The legislature needs to get to the bottom of this.

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

Dietitian to discuss nutrition for GLP-1 users

In collaboration with the Morris Hospital YMCA, Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers is presenting an important nutrition seminar for individuals who take appetite suppressant GLP-1 medications.

The free seminar, "Nutrition Tips for GLP-1 Success," will be presented by a Morris Hospital dietitian on Wednesday, Sept. 16, from 4:30-5:30 p.m. at the Morris Hospital YMCA, 2200 W. Dupont Ave.,

Morris.

The program is open to everyone.

While GLP-1 medications can help reduce appetite, it's important for people who are taking the medications to practice healthy habits through smart nutrition and practical lifestyle strategies.

To register call 815-705-7358 or go to www.morrishospital.org/events and select the nutrition category.

Mobile food pantry coming Monday to So. Wilmington

Catholic Charities' Mobile Food Pantry will be distributing food on Monday, Sept. 21 and Oct. 19 from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at St. Lawrence Church (135 Rice Rd. in South Wilmington) in the church parking lot (rain or shine).

Catholic Charities and the Northern Illinois Food Bank have partnered to deliver nutritious food

(meat, produce and non-perishable items) to people in need.

The Mobile Food Pantry will use a "drive thru" method to distribute pre-packed groceries.

For more information about Catholic Charities, please visit catholiccharitiesjoliet.org.

Emergency sewer repair completed following utility line damage

BY ROSE PANIERI
STAFF WRITER

An emergency sewer repair on Kankakee River Drive has been completed and paid for after a utility contractor accidentally damaged a sanitary sewer main and service line during construction work in July.

The work was performed by Conley Excavating & Construction of Morris, which repaired a section of sewer infrastruc-

ture after a contractor drilling operation struck both an 8-inch sanitary sewer main and a 6-inch service line.

According to the invoice submitted to the City of Wilmington, the damage occurred July 15, 2026, during utility installation activities. Conley Excavating was called in to complete the repair and restore service.

The total cost of the emergency repair was \$8,934.90.

City Administrator Melissa Wiak informed the council that the damage was the result of the contractor's negligence during the installation of fiber optic cable at the site.

"So, let's just approve this tonight, and then we will go after them for reimbursement," Wiak said.

The payment covers labor, equipment and materials associated with repairing the damaged sewer main and service connection.



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Downtown Restaurants & Bars will be Open



Illinois Capitol renovations set to wrap up this winter

BY BRENDEN MOORE
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — Nearly five years after construction crews started moving dirt on the \$350 million renovation of the Illinois State Capitol's north wing, there are finally glimmers of light at the end of the tunnel.

The massive project, which included a rehab of the Illinois Senate chamber, construction of a new underground parking garage and conference room and the creation of a new main entrance with enhanced security features, will wrap up "sometime this winter," Architect of the Capitol Andrea Aggertt told Capitol News Illinois in an interview this week.

"We are slightly behind," Aggertt said. "As with everything, it's almost like we're on an archeological site. You don't know what you're going to find until you get into it."

There's been progress: The Senate returned to its refurbished digs on schedule in January 2025. And the \$46 million, 435-space parking garage for legislators and staff opened this spring — more than two years later than anticipated. Under the updated timetable, the entire project will be complete about two years behind schedule.

Despite overruns on time, Aggertt said the project, funded by the Rebuild Illinois capital construction program, is "within that budget" and they "don't anticipate going over that."

'Surprises'

Labor shortages attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and a scarcity of specific materials necessary to renovate a 150-year-old building contributed to the slowdown, Aggertt said. Not to mention the weather. Multiple heavy rain events this summer set the construction timeline back another several weeks. And then there were several unanticipated "surprises" that Aggertt and her team were confronted with as construction progressed.

Among them: The discovery of wrought iron trusses that were apparently hidden behind walls for more than a century. Their presence was not even unearthed during the last major renovation of the north wing in the 1970s. But the trusses, it turns out, play a critical role supporting the Capitol's mansard roof.

So, they had to pivot, working around those structural components and reallocating floor plans while making sure they



Capitol News Illinois photo by Jerry Nowicki

A NEW SECURE entrance on the north side of the Illinois Capitol is under construction. The Capitol architect's office says construction should be done this winter, five years after it began.

would be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"There have been things that we did not anticipate," Aggertt said. "We also had staff and members in offices all the way until the time we started construction. So that means our first chance to look behind walls that nobody had seen for 70 years was at that point, and that also led to surprises that we had to overcome, which I'm proud to say that the group that we have working, the general contractors, the subcontractors, all the union tradesmen and women, have done a great job to complete that."

Most of the work inside the north wing is now complete, including the removal of mezzanines added in the 1960s and 1970s that subdivided floors with lofty ceilings. This will result in less office space in the Capitol but restore the building's original look.

Detailing work is done and new carpeting has been installed with furniture to be delivered to the refurbished north wing

in the coming months, Aggertt said.

A casualty of this restoration? The Capitol office of former President Barack Obama, who served in the Illinois Senate from 1997 to 2004. Aggertt said it would've been "impossible" to maintain that one space while gutting everything else around it.

What's left?

The renovations of the third through sixth floors is complete with construction still wrapping up on the first and second floors along with the new underground conference center and welcome center, Aggertt said.

Work has finally begun on the removal of the paved north drive. Its tear-up had been pushed to the back of the queue so construction crews could utilize it.

The drive once included parking spots for senators and staff and was a popular pick-up and drop-off location, first with horse-drawn carriages and later cars.

But in an era of heightened security

threats, the drive allowed cars too close to the building and it will thus be replaced with a sidewalk that'll allow pedestrian access to the building from Second and Monroe streets.

Security enhancements were a key consideration in the details of the renovation.

The new north wing entrance, which will serve as the main gateway into the building, will feature an attached welcome center that will allow the Secretary of State's police to screen visitors before they enter the Capitol itself. There will be two security lines to better accommodate large groups and a dedicated drop-off lane for tour buses on Monroe Street.

The new space will include an information desk, a cafe, public restrooms and a room where visitors can start their tour of the building with an informational video.

"Our plan is that when groups do come into the Capitol building, there would hopefully be a video or two that they can watch... about this construction, maybe the original construction" and "some of the more notable officials that have served in the Illinois State Capitol building," Aggertt said.

Like any building, the Capitol requires regular upkeep and maintenance, Aggertt said. Before this, the Capitol's west wing underwent a \$50 million renovation between 2011 and 2013.

Aggertt said there's no funding allocated yet for future work, but she said the building's east wing will need a refurbishment like the north wing within the next decade. They'll soon need to replace the roof of the Capitol dome, which hasn't had any major work done on it since the 1970s.

If there's anything she wants people to take away from the renovation, Aggertt said it's the "beauty of the original architecture."

"So, unfortunately, over the last several decades, mezzanines were added," and "walls were painted white," Aggertt said. "So we had the cool opportunity to take a deeper look at all those layers of paint and determine what was originally there. So everyone's going to be able to see that now."

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

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

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.

WANTED TO BUY

I buy classic cars especially convertibles 50/60s Impala/ 55-57 Bel Air/ Cadillac/ Monte Carlo/ Cutlass/ Buick/ Caprice/ Chevelle / Mercedes/ etc., any condition
414-514-1828 Bill

WANT TO RENT

Retired woman would like to rent nice room. Call 815-458-2050.

WANTED

WANTED SCRAP METAL

- Farm Machinery
- Garden Tractors
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- Appliances
- Anything Metal

Free pickup 7 days 815-210-8819

STORAGE

PUBLIC STORAGE
Clementine's Closets
815-530-0200
- No Deposit - Starting at \$50
515 Davy Lane, Wilmington

APARTMENT FOR RENT

Apartment for rent Newly renovated 830 sq ft. apartment, 2 bedroom, 1 bath. Located in Godley, \$1,200 a month. Call Mike for details, 815-370-6110.

GARAGE SALE

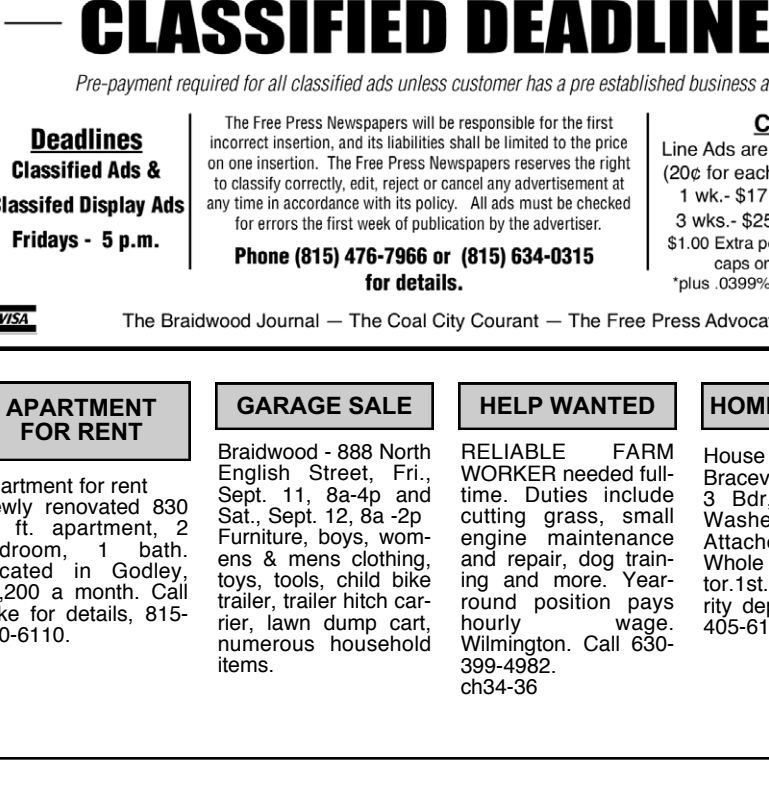
Braidwood - 888 North English Street, Fri., Sept. 11, 8a-4p and Sat., Sept. 12, 8a -2p Furniture, boys, womens & mens clothing, toys, tools, child bike trailer, trailer hitch carrier, lawn dump cart, numerous household items.

HELP WANTED

RELIABLE FARM WORKER needed full-time. Duties include cutting grass, small engine maintenance and repair, dog training and more. Year-round position pays hourly wage. Wilmington. Call 630-399-4982. ch34-36

HOME FOR RENT

House for rent: Braceville/Gardner 3 Bdr, 1 1/2 Bath, Washer and Dryer. Attached garage. Whole house generator. 1st, last and security deposit. Call 815-405-6134.

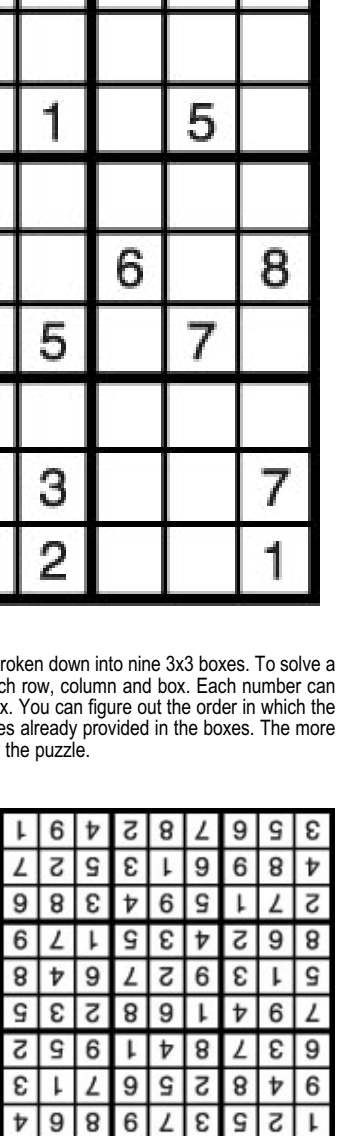
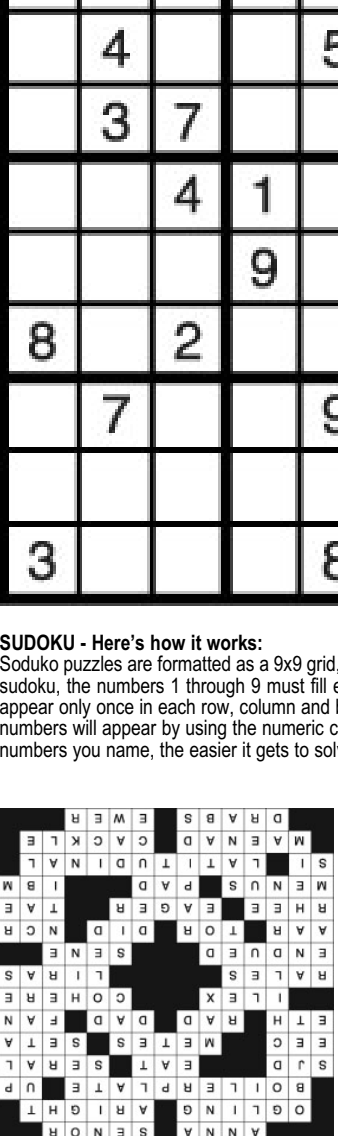


53. Food listings
55. Bachelor's place to crash
56. Big Blue
57. Sports magazine
58. Relating to a place north of south of the equator
63. Female follower of Bacchus
65. A type of laugh
66. Slovenly women
67. Large jug

CLUES DOWN
1. Boxing's GOAT
2. Zero
3. Midway between north and northeast
4. Concurred
5. Added flavor
6. Amount of time
7. Eggs of parasitic insects
8. S-shaped moldings
9. Atomic #45
10. ___ d'art: small artistic item
11. A godparent's "kids"
13. Nocturnal burrowing lizard
15. Hit lightly
17. Aircrafts
18. Witness
21. Alluding to something
23. Take to the limit
24. Baglike structure in a plant or animal
27. Start over
29. Administered
32. Romanian monetary unit
34. Unit of liquid capacity
35. Equips with weapons again
36. Disney town
39. Female deer
40. Title of respect
43. A place to go rafting
44. A way to conclude
46. Type of television
47. Georgia rockers
49. Leonhard ___, Swiss mathematician
51. Slang for gun
54. River in Bosnia and Herzegovina
59. Bar bill
60. Small, gray-headed crow
61. Frozen water
62. Norwegian krone
64. Commercial



SUDOKU - Here's how it works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle.



- CLUES ACROSS**
1. Longtime Vogue editor Wintour
5. A Spanish title of respect
10. A way of looking
12. Properly
14. Rolled steel
16. Not down
18. Law degree
19. Consume food
20. Intermediate ecological stage
22. Old world, new
23. Dispense justice
25. Stiff hair-like structure
26. Ethiopia
27. Cool!

28. Father
30. An enthusiastic devotee of sports
31. Holm oak
33. Be united
35. Rattling breaths
37. Supermarket chain
38. Provided with a quality
40. Samoan monetary unit
41. Swiss river
42. Hill (Celtic)
44. Have already done
45. ATM company
48. Syngman ___, Korean president
50. Very willing
52. Arctic explorers (abbr.)

WILDCAT SPORTS



Photo by Eric Fisher
ATTACKING THE NET for a block for the Wilmington varsity is sophomore Kendall Martin.

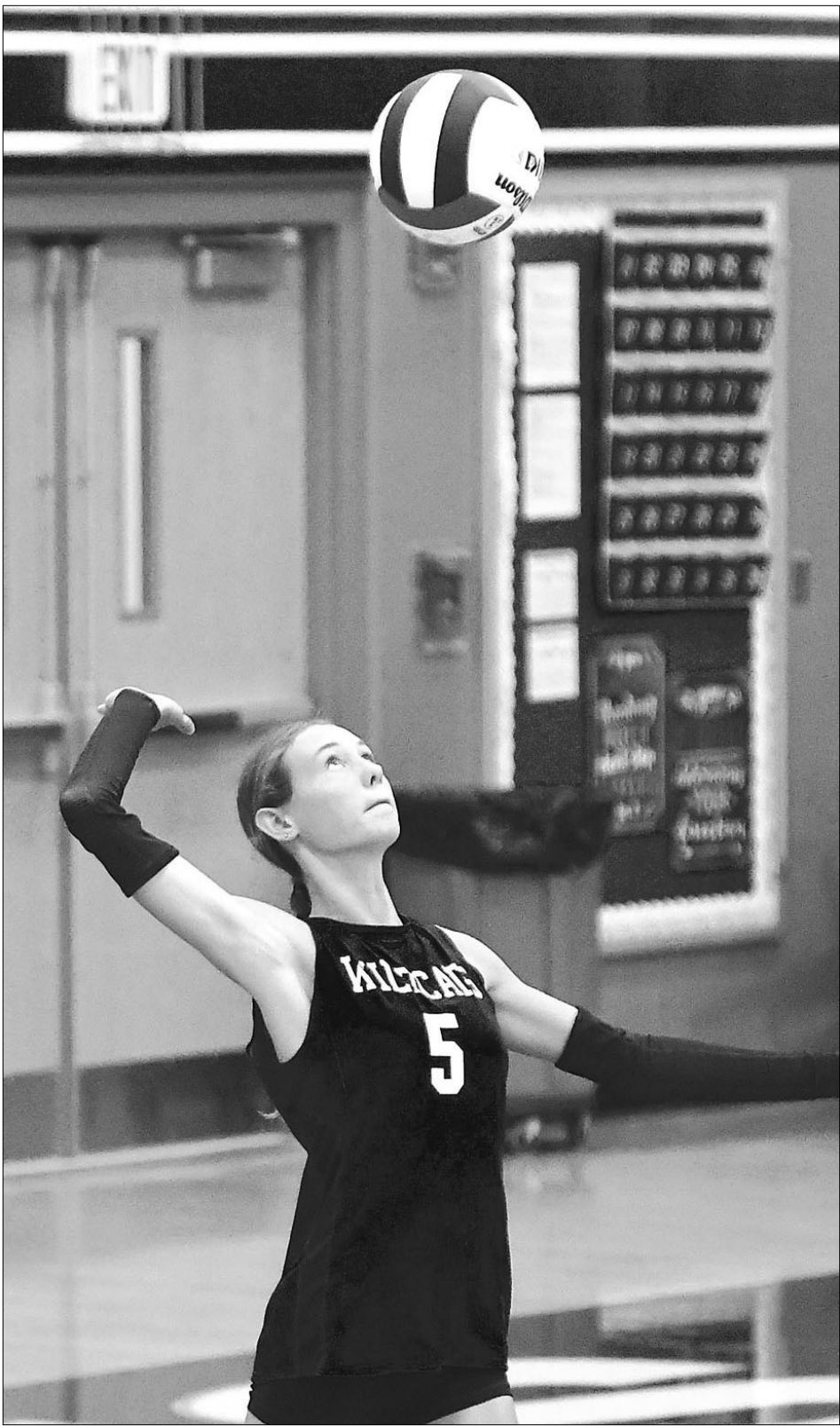


Photo by Eric Fisher
SERVING FOR the varsity Lady 'Cats is Madisen Van Duyne.

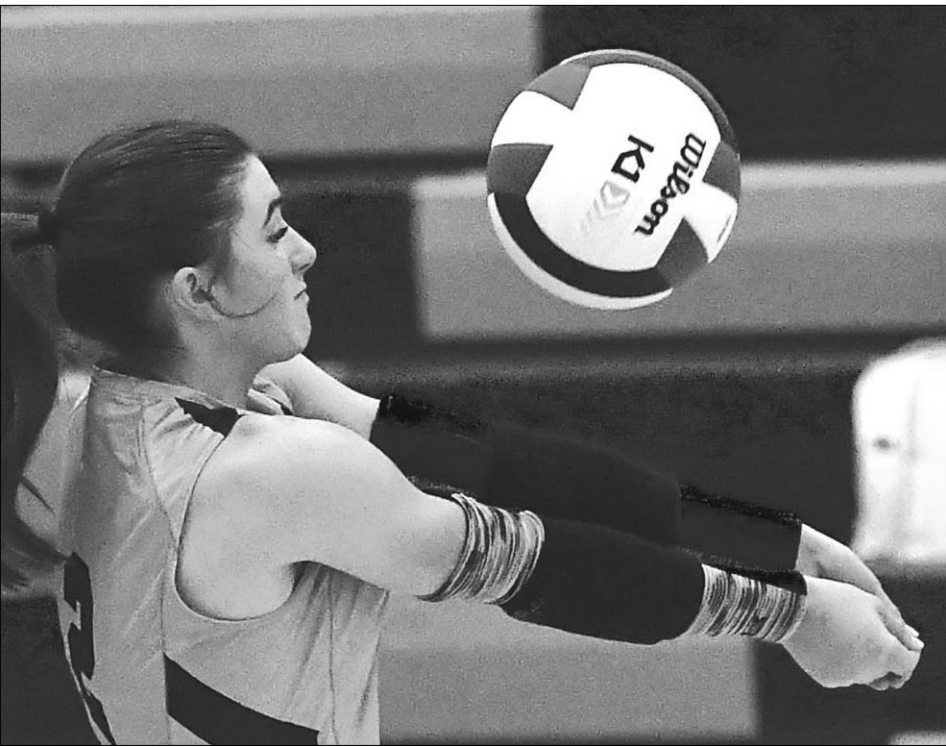


Photo by Eric Fisher
DEFENDING THE BACK COURT for the Lady Wildcats is senior Sami Liaromatis.



Photo by Eric Fisher
FIRING A SERVE for the varsity Lady Cats is Ashlyn Warriner, a senior setter.

So far so good for conference play for Lady 'Cats

The Wilmington volleyball teams opened conference play by traveling to Peotone on Tuesday night, winning at the Varsity and JV level, but losing at the freshman level.

Varsity won 25-20, 23-25, 25-18. Both Sami Liaromatis and Madisen Van Duyne had 6 kills each with Holly Eighner and Makenzie Rodriguez were right behind them with 5 kills and 3 blocks each.

Rodriguez also had 3 aces. Liaromatis also added 20 digs, 1 block and 1 ace while Van Duyne had a dig and a block. Kylie Tafoya was perfect behind the serving line while having 15 digs, 3 assists and a kill.

Addison Billingsley led her team with 14 assists, 10 digs and an ace.

JV won 25-21, 25-16. Aubri Christiansen led her team with 5 kills and 4 blocks. Izzy Olsen had 6 assists, 5 digs, 3 aces and a block. Nadine Ligid led defensively with 12 digs, while Taylor Tenn and Aby Winker had 8 digs and 1 kill each.

Freshman lost 16-25, 19-25. Lilly Bailey led her team with 3 kills, 2 aces, 2 blocks and 6 digs. Brooklyn Long and Kenzie Lupinski both added 7 digs each. Long also had 4 aces and an assist. Bristol Billingsley had 6 assists, 5 digs and 2 aces. Raelynn Grygiel pitched in with 6 digs as well and an ace.

In Thursday night's conference

matchup against the Herscher Tigers, the Lady Cats won varsity 25-18, 25-16.

Holly Eighner led offensively with 5 kills and a block. Makenzie Rodriguez was right behind her with 3 kills but added 4 digs, 2 blocks and an ace. Defensively Sami Liaromatis and

Kylie Tafoya had 13 digs apiece. Liaromatis also added 2 kills, 2 blocks and an ace. Aly Allgood helped at the net with 3 blocks and a dig.

JV lost a close one 25-8, 10-25, 25-27. Defense kept it close with

Taylor Tenn having 13 digs to go with her 1 kill. Aby Winker ended the evening with 12 digs, 3 assists, 2 kills and 2 aces. Nadine Ligid added another 8 digs to go with her 3 aces, 2 assists and a kill. Middles Aubri Christiansen and Meredith Marquardt made an impact at the net with 5 and 3 kills respectively.

Freshmen also lost a close one 25-9, 13-25, 19-25. Lilly Bailey had 6 kills, 4 blocks, 3 digs and an ace. Aubrey Ptacek had 10 digs, 5 aces, 3 kills and a block. Setter Brooklyn Long had 8 assists, 7 digs and 4 aces to help her team.

The varsity Lady Wildcats are 5-4 overall, 2-0 in the conference. They will host Beecher on Wednesday and Lisle Thursday.



IVC champs!

CONGRATULATIONS TO Wilmington Middle School "A" Baseball team on their IVC Championship win! The Wildcats secured a 3-2 walk-off victory over Reed Custer in extra innings to claim the title. Team members include (kneeling, from left): Carson Virgin, Noah Hansen, Carson Alsbury, Declan Crutchfield and Nicholas Wells. Standing are Caleb Machalek, Coach Tim Hooker, Nathan Talley, Liam Sukley, Ryan Sukley, Nolan Van Duyne, Johnny Long, Kaden Cragg, Rocco Ceci and Coach Blake Harseim.

WILDCAT SPORTS



Photo by Eric Fisher

TOUCHDOWN! Wilmington linemen Nash Rink (55) and Camdon Allen (67) signal a touchdown while Hunter Kaitschuck crosses the goal line for his third touchdown of the night during a 48-8 victory over Peotone.



Photo by Eric Fisher

BLOCKED PUNT! Wilmington's Nolan Lindsey chases after the ball after blocking a Peotone punt attempt during Friday's win on the road.

Scoreboard or not, Wildcats make it clear who won

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

The scoreboard at Peotone was only half working Friday night. The clock worked. So did the quarter and the yard line showing where the ball was spotted.

The part displaying the score? Not so much.

It really didn't matter. There was never much doubt who was winning.

Wilmington spread the love offensively with five different players scoring touchdowns and nine Wildcats getting an opportunity to carry the football during a convincing 48-8 victory over the Blue Devils.

The Wildcats piled up 382 yards of offense, including 341 on the ground, while limiting Peotone to 119 total yards. Wilmington also held a commanding 13-8 advantage in first downs.

Junior Hunter Kaitschuck led the ground assault, carrying nine times for 119 yards and three touchdowns — an average of better than 13 yards per attempt.

Wilmington wasted little time taking control. Kaitschuck broke loose for a 23-yard touchdown in the first quarter and Evan Ostheim added the extra point for a 7-0 lead.

The Wildcats struck again when Ryan Schraeger raced 35 yards for a touchdown. Ostheim's kick made it 14-0 after one quarter.

Things didn't get any better for the Blue Devils in the second.

Kaitschuck scored his second touchdown on a 56-yard run, followed by a 7-yard dash, before Dane Van Duyne got into the act with a 5-yard touchdown plunge. Wilmington was comfortably ahead 34-0 and the outcome was already becoming apparent

— even without the scoreboard displaying it.

With Wilmington firmly in control, many of the starters spent much of the second half on the sideline.

Cole Cutter added to the lead in the third quarter with a 32-yard touchdown run. Aiden Davis supplied the extra point to make it 41-0.

Peotone finally broke through in the fourth quarter when Wyatt Beechy scored on a 3-yard run and the Blue Devils converted the two-point attempt.

Chase Rabideau supplied the final word, however, breaking free for a 55-yard touchdown for the undefeated Wildcats. Davis kicked the PAT to complete the 48-8 victory.

Kaitschuck wasn't the only Wildcat with impressive rushing numbers. Schraeger rushed three times for 50 yards and a score. Cutter had one carry

for 32 yards and a touchdown, Chase Rabideau gained 50 yards on three attempts and Flynn Bryant contributed 34 yards on four carries. Quarterback Brysen Meents had three carries totalling 40 yards while Van Duyne finished with three rushes for 8 yards including his touchdown.

The Wildcats averaged nearly 11 yards per rushing attempt.

Defense shuts the door

While the offense was piling up yards and points, Wilmington's defense made sure Peotone had little chance to keep pace.

The Blue Devils managed only 72 rushing yards and 47 through the air and were held scoreless through the first three quarters.

Colin Strong led a balanced Wildcat defensive effort with six total tackles, including two tackles for loss.

Tim Powlick recorded five total tackles, while Tyler Nelson and Tyler Krand each finished with four. Cooper Holman had four total tackles, including a tackle for loss, while Billy Bachela and Kaitschuck each contributed three.

Nash Rink, Kaitschuck and Holman were also credited with quarterback pressures, while Meents blocked a punt.

Wildcats rolling through three

The victory kept Wilmington undefeated at 3-0 while adding another chapter to what has been a dominating start.

Through three games the Wildcats have outscored their opponents 112-15, including 42 points in the first quarter and 36 in the second. Wilmington has accumulated 986 total yards, with 888 coming on the ground.

Kaitschuck leads Wilmington's rushing

attack with 335 yards on 40 carries and five touchdowns, averaging 8.38 yards per attempt. Van Duyne has 120 yards and four touchdowns on 29 carries, while Rabideau has gained 115 yards on six attempts with two touchdowns.

Meents is 4-for-4 passing for 112 yards and two touchdowns. Holman has caught three of those passes for 102 yards and two scores.

Defensively, Rink has nine total tackles, while Kaitschuck and Holman have eight apiece and Van Duyne has six. Rink has also recovered a fumble, while Wilmington has registered seven tackles for loss through its first three games.

The Wildcats return home Friday when they host Herscher at 7 p.m. in another Illinois Central Eight Conference matchup.

Wildcats to honor Reents before taking on Herscher

Friday night's game against Herscher will begin with a celebration of the past before the Wilmington Wildcats turn their attention to adding another victory to the future.

Prior to the 7 p.m. kickoff, the Wildcat football program will honor long-time coach Jeff Reents, who has now collected 301 career victories following Wilmington's 48-8 win Friday at Peotone.

Reents entered the season with 298 victories, according to the IHSA record book, and Wilmington's 3-0 start has pushed him past the 300-win milestone. The IHSA's current career list has only seven Illinois coaches ahead of 301 victories.

Once the pregame recognition is complete, the Wildcats will be heavily favored to give their coach No. 302.

Wilmington enters Friday's Illinois Central Eight Conference matchup

3-0 overall and 1-0 in the ICE, having outscored its first three opponents 112-15. The Wildcats opened with a 16-7 victory over Bishop McNamara before shutting out Morrison 48-0 and rolling past Peotone 48-8.

Herscher will arrive in Wilmington still searching for its first victory.

The Tigers are 0-3 overall and 0-1 in conference play after falling to Manteno 48-13 Friday. Herscher has been outscored 119-41 through three games.

The Tigers came tantalizingly close to starting the season with a victory, losing their opener to Canton 30-28. Things have gotten tougher since then. Bishop McNamara shut out Herscher 41-0 before Manteno handed the Tigers their third straight loss.

Wilmington, meanwhile, has been especially effective on the ground. Through three games the

Wildcats have rushed for 888 yards, including 341 during Friday's victory at Peotone.

Hunter Kaitschuck leads the ground attack with 335 yards on 40 carries and five touchdowns. Dane Van Duyne has rushed for 120 yards and four scores, while Chase Rabideau has gained 115 yards with two touchdowns.

The Wildcats have needed to throw only four times this season. Quarterback Brysen Meents is a perfect 4-for-4 for 112 yards and two touchdowns, with Cooper Holman catching three passes for 102 yards and both scores.

Wilmington's defense has been just as impressive, allowing only 15 points in three games. The Wildcats held Morrison scoreless and kept Peotone off the board through three quarters Friday before the Blue Devils finally scored against Wilmington's reserves.

On paper, the matchup favors Wilmington, but Herscher has shown it can put points on the board. In its two games in which it scored, the Tigers produced 28 against Canton and 13 against Manteno. Herscher had 131 rushing yards and 105 passing yards against Canton.

The Wildcats also have recent history on their side.

Wilmington traveled to Herscher last season and returned home with a 49-7 victory. That win was part of a 13-game winning streak to finish as the 2025 Class 2A state champions. A win on Friday would mean they have only nine more wins to go to defend their title.

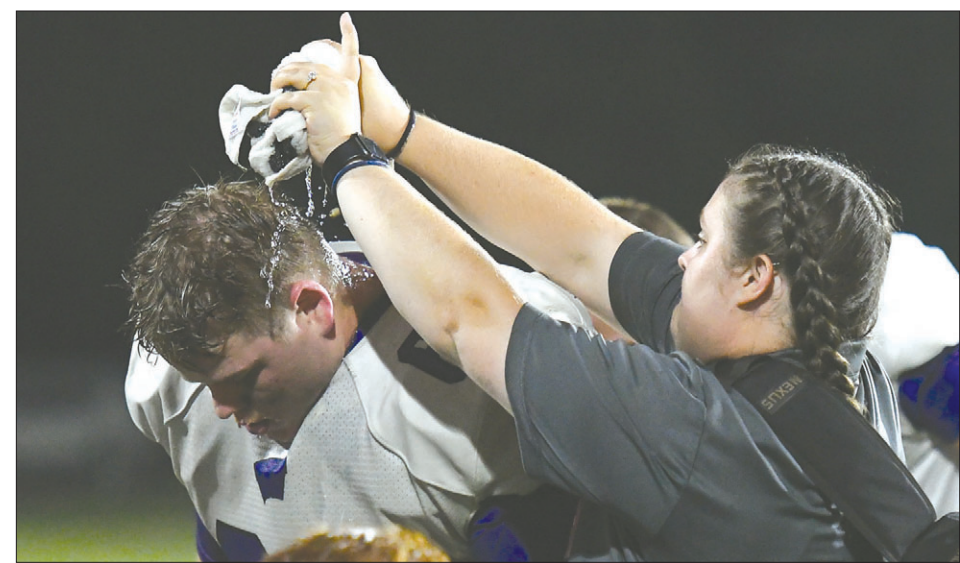


Photo by Eric Fisher

ATHLETIC TRAINER Maddie Segrist twists a towel to release cool water on the neck of Wildcat lineman Camdon Allen during Friday's contest at Peotone. The temperature was 84 degrees at the 7:30 p.m. kickoff and the high humidity made it feel even hotter. The frosh-soph game was rescheduled to Tuesday with hopes there will be relief from the heat.



Photo by Eric Fisher

WILMINGTON SENIOR Fynn Bryant speeds past a key block by Hunter Kaitschuck during one of his four carries for 34 yards at Peotone.

Join us in the fight,

**RAFFLE
DONATIONS NEEDED**

#morethan4

Help make a difference by donating a raffle basket!

Event: Volley for a Cure @ Wilmington HS
Date: Tuesday, September 22, 2026

All proceeds benefit Megan's Mission Foundation
— thank you for your support!



To donate raffle items, simply create a themed basket, label it with your name and a list of items, and drop it off at Stephanie's House, 935 E. Alma Dr.

Questions, contact Stephanie @ 815-252-6269 or sstickel@209u.net

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