



Wildcats triumph before pandemic

WILDCAT SPORTS



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Financial audit results: Wilmington is in good shape

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

Wilmington ended 2020 with a clean audit of its most recent fiscal year, and in a positive financial position.

The city of Wilmington held a special meeting on Dec. 22 to review the audit of the fiscal year that ended on April 30, 2020 (FY20).

Trevor Debelak, CPA and staff accountant with Mack & Associates of Morris, presented the findings to the council during a meeting that was held via videoconference.

"Overall, the audit went really well," Debelak said, adding that the audit did not identify any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in the city's financial reporting.

"It's really a clean audit, and it's really about as good as it can get," he told the council.

The city's major funds — the general fund and the Ridgeport TIF fund — both saw increases in FY20. The general fund earned an additional half million dollars, starting the year at \$443,338 and ending at \$961,084. The Ridgeport TIF earned \$21,269 over the course of FY20, starting the year at a negative balance of -\$14,693 and ending at \$6,596.

The total government funds ended the year with a combined balance of \$1.8 million.

Proprietary/Enterprise funds, which include water and sewer operations and capital projects funds, also predominantly saw increases in FY20. Total combined operating revenue in those funds in FY20 was \$4.2 million, while expenses were \$3.2 million.

Debelak said the city was in a strong financial position as of the close of FY20, and that expenses for the city were

appropriate, including payment of debt balances and the purchase of two police vehicles and one property purchase at 212 N. Water St.

"Everything looks where we would expect it to be for the city," he said. "This past year, everything was pretty reasonable."

Debelak said the only adjustments the city should make for the next audit include completion of bank reconciliations and audit adjustments closer to year end, in a more timely manner. Debelak noted that the addition of a new financial officer plus complications from the COVID-19 pandemic played a role in those issues, not deficiencies in reporting.

The general fund serves as the main operating fund for the city, covering administrative costs as well as police protection.

The audit shows that in FY20, the city was able to spend below budget on nearly all expenses related to the general fund.

Those expenses include:

- Finance and Administration — \$635,635, a total of \$116,000 below the final budget

- Police protection — \$2.06 million, a total of \$177,000 below budget

- Streets and Alleys — \$462,950, a total of \$98,000 below the final budget

Revenues in the general fund include \$1.2 million in property tax, \$598,917 in utility tax, \$620,392 in state income tax, \$1 million in state sales tax, and \$136,709 in video gaming tax.

Special revenues received in FY20 include:

- ESDA — The city's Emergency Services Disaster

SEE AUFIT, PAGE 3

LOCAL GROCERY STORES had trouble mid-March keeping items in stock; bath tissue, paper towels, sanitizing wipes, milk and bread caused store shelves to become bare as a stay-at-home order was issued by the governor sparking panic buying.

2020: The year of the virus

When the new year rolled in on Jan. 1, no one could have foreseen that 2020 would be the year we all stayed home. From Zoom meetings to masks at the grocery store, 2020 was a year like no other.

Here, a look at the stories that kept folks talking over the past 365 days.

COVID-19

When looking back at 2020, the most dominant story for the region, state, nation, and around the globe is COVID-19. The novel coronavirus, first discovered in China November of 2019, showed up in the United States in January. By March, no one's lives would be the same.

All across Illinois, public and private schools closed on March 17, the same day that Illinois recorded its first official death from the virus. That same week, the state went under a safer at home order, which became known simply as "lockdown."

All non-essential businesses were closed, and the city of Wilmington and the Wilmington School District 209-U Board of Education began holding meetings remotely.

At the same time, stores began to run out of toilet paper and other paper supplies as folks inexplicably began hoarding.

Illinois Governor JB Pritzker's Restore Illinois plan came out in May, outlining how and when businesses, state parks, sporting events, and general activities would reopen.

As the weather warmed, drive thru COVID testing sites became available, even popping up in Braidwood and Wilmington.

When non-essential retail and indoor service at bars and restaurants resumed in June, the city of Wilmington offered



Photo by Eric Fisher

IN EARLY OCTOBER new owners (from left) Anna Sarmiento and brother/sister Kevin Valle and Maria Valle took over operations at Belletini Foods in Wilmington. Valle's Produce Market Corporation, with three other stores, has since expanded the produce section and is introducing other fresh items in the meat and grocery departments.

up the first of two incentives for folks to shop local, giving a \$50 water bill credit to folks who turned in receipts from local establishments.

By early to late summer festivals were shuttered. Braidwood Lions called off Summerfest in May, while Catfish Days in Wilmington officially got the ax in late June. Plans for a possible smaller Catfish Days gathering were scrapped in July.

Wilmington High School held an outdoor socially distanced graduation for the Class of 2020 on June 28.

The school district established committees to create a back to school plan. The district had hoped for a 100% return to the classroom, but in late July, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) issued updated guidance regarding mandates for back to school procedures, including making a remote learning option mandatory. Masks were also made mandatory for

students and staff, as well as symptom screenings, capacity limits of no more than 50 people per space, increased cleaning and social distancing as much as possible.

In August, the Wilmington City Council approved a local mask ordinance, requiring masks in public spaces.

In November, the entire state entered Tier 3 resurgence mitigations, which mandated closure of indoor service at bars and restaurants. However, across the state, those businesses remained open. Wilmington Mayor Roy Strong spoke out in favor of those businesses, noting that the loss of income and the possibility for businesses to close permanently was too much for the city to support the mitigation efforts.

Dam interesting!

After sending out a survey to Wilmington residents, the majority of respondents said they'd like to see the Kankakee

River dam taken out.

But the survey is just the first step of a long journey to address the dam, and if it will ever be removed from its spot along the South Island.

The survey results were revealed during the Nov. 11 meeting of the Buildings, Grounds, Parks, Health and Safety Committee, with the majority of respondents, 304, answering that they would like to see complete removal of the dam.

Surveys were sent out with water bills in August. The survey was a result of renewed interest earlier this year in pursuing changes to or removal of the dam, sparked by conversations initiated with the public by Alderman Ben Dietz and former Alderman Jake Tenn.

Since 1982, at least 16 people have lost their lives after being swept into the hydraulic roller dam.

SEE 2020, PAGE 2

Wilmington approves annual tax levy

STAFF REPORT

The city of Wilmington has approved its annual tax levy.

On Dec. 15, the members of the City Council approved the annual levy in the amount of \$1.256 million.

The annual levy is property tax levied and assessed upon all property within the corporate limits of the city that are subject to taxation, according to the valuation that is assessed and equalized for state and county purposes.

Property taxes provide just a portion of the city's overall revenue base.

Funds are distributed for use in the general corporate and police department operations fund, the police pension fund, ESDA, IMRF, auditing, liability and insurance, workman's comp, streets and alleys, and other city held

funds.

The council also approved the annual levy for Special Service Area Number 1 — most of the Deer Creek Subdivision — in the amount of \$32,475.

Both levy approvals passed unanimously.

The city did not hold a public hearing prior to approval of the levy. By state law, a truth in taxation hearing is only required when a district levies more than 5% over the previous year's extension. The levy passed represents a 4.9% increase.

By state statute the approved levies must be filed with the county clerk on or before the last Tuesday in December.



BERKOT'S SUPER FOODS

Wishes You A Happy New Year!

2020

The survey was based on guidance from a 2017 study, conducted by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), that compared the costs of changes at the dam.

Mayor Roy Strong, who has been a vocal proponent of keeping the dam, said the survey was misleading, because the cost of turning the dam over to the state is free.

He said that people naturally opted for the cheapest option, when in reality there might be ways to keep the dam that are far below the millions it would cost the city if the only other options were the ones available on the survey.

Strong said that while the survey worked to gauge public opinion on a handful of options, the next step would be to meet with the Army Corps of Engineers to see what steps the city can take to address safety at the dam.

Strong has long been in favor of adding rip rap to the face of the dam in an effort to reduce the danger should someone get pulled in.

Park switches hands
Children's Memorial Park in Northcrest transferred ownership from the City of Wilmington to the Wilmington Park District in June.

The public began to see minor changes in the layout of the park as soon as the Park District took over and mobilized a volunteer workforce from the Community Foundation for Wilmington Parks, Recreation and Improvement. Those volunteers installed new play-

ground equipment in early fall. The district also held its first sand volleyball tournament at the site.

The asphalt of the former skate park will eventually be removed in favor of green space to bring some of that "natural feel" back to the front of the park, district officials noted.

The park was gifted to the district by the city.

Fire Station 2
The Wilmington Fire Protection District opened the doors on its second fire house on Monday, Aug. 10.

Station 2, located at 29745 Elion Boulevard, near Lorenzo Road and I-55, houses an engine and ambulance. The station is located inside the Elion Logistics park (formerly RidgePort), and provides service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to the citizens of the dire protection district.

The Wilmington City Council approved a zoning amendment and the site plan for a new satellite station for the Wilmington Fire Protection District in 2018.

Station 2 was constructed on 2.1 acres just south of the Petro mechanic's building on Elion Boulevard, north of the General Mills warehouse.

The station is made of pre-cast concrete, for a total price of between \$3 and \$4 million, including permitting and engineering.

The approximate 10,000 square foot building includes staff quarters and is manned 24 hours per day.

Station 2 will serve the logistics center, but is also strategically placed for quick response to I-55 and the western residential neighborhoods in unincorporated Wilmington, such as O'Brien's Subdivision, Phelan Acres and

Cottage Road.

St. Rose School closes
Despite pleas from the public, the 10 members of the St. Rose School Class of 2020 were the last to graduate from the 73-year-old institution.

In March, families of students were surprised with the news that the school would be shuttered in the 2020-2021 school year, and merging with St. Joseph school in Manhattan.

After the announcement, the "Save St. Rose Task Force" was established. Despite overwhelming support from the community asking the Diocese of Joliet to reconsider the closure, the plans for the closure moved forward.

Multiple families, parishioners, and supporters sent letters to the diocese, arguing that any overspending or financial mismanagement at St. Rose parish — and not school expenses — that have put the parish in financial dire straits.

Library smart lockers
Following a closure to the public then modified hours due to the pandemic, the Wilmington Public Library finally went back to regular hours, with capacity limits and mandatory face coverings in place, on Oct. 5.

But a bigger change at the facility are the new smart lockers. The smart lockers allow patrons to check out their materials online, then pick them up 24-hours a day inside the small building just outside the library's front entrance.

The lockers are activated either by a five digit code sent to the patron via text, or by QR code, or utilizing an app from Smiota, the company that produced the lockers.

The facility itself cost around \$39,000 for construction, plus \$15,000 for the lockers themselves. The building was built with mostly local labor, and much of the services were donated.

The library also launched a new app developed by the PrairieCat catalog, which connects Wilmington Library to 125 other libraries across northern Illinois.

Gas station facelift
After years of sitting stagnant as an eyesore along Route 66, the old Marathon gas station in Wilmington looks to be on the road to revitalization.

In September, crews showed up and pulled out an old tank at the site at 609 Baltimore St. in Wilmington and hauled dirt and other fill out of the property.

The tanks were pulled after a permit was secured from the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM).

The Marathon gas station closed in May 2008.

In January 2015, the city of Wilmington filed a complaint in Will County Circuit Court asking the court to order that the structures be repaired or demolished, but was unable to locate the site's former owner.

The site went to auction in 2018, and, as of June 2020, the site is owned by Adnan Mirza and Luis D'Oleo, of Plainfield.

D'Oleo said the plans right now are to build a car dealership at the site.

Water bill mayhem
The cost of water in the city of Wilmington has been a hot button issue for residents for several years, with folks arguing that their monthly billing changes dramatically and can increase into the hundreds or even the thousand dollar range at the drop of a hat.

A water loss report issued by the city over the summer showed that in 2019, Wilmington lost almost half, yes 50%, of the total water it sent out. From January through June of 2020, the city lost between 40-54% of its water each month.

In April, the city paid \$10,750 to M.E. Simpson Company, Inc., of Indiana,



BUSINESSES AROUND WILMINGTON, including Lickety Split on Baltimore Street, have shown their support for St. Rose School by posting "Save St. Rose" messages on their signs.

for an updated water survey to look for leaks along 50 miles of the supply system, the first such survey conducted in nine years.

That survey found 24 leaks throughout the system. Two leaks were main line leaks, four were service line leaks, one was a valve packing leak, 16 were hydrant leaks, and the last was classified as "other."

According to the report, M.E. Simpson estimated the city was losing 70,560 gallons per day.

The report notes that a hole as small as one-quarter inch can result in a loss of 14,950 gallons per day.

Earlier in the year, Alderman Ben Dietz also brought up for discussion Davy Lane properties. Dietz said he had been told that up to 25 Davy Lane properties had not been receiving full water bills, if at all.

But Mayor Roy Strong disputed the contention that Davy Lane properties are getting anything for free.

In September, the city supplied utility billing documents for a total of 34 properties on Davy Lane for public inspection. While account activity was listed, it was only listed for the most recent billing cycle at the time — July 16 through Aug. 15.

While each of the properties had a bill, consumption was low on nearly all bills.

While each property paid the water and sewer base fees, the water billing was in the \$8 to \$9 range. Four of the properties were listed as having the water service shut off.

For 16 of those properties, the current utility bill was identical: \$64.87.

The billing for the Davy Lane addresses at 400, 411, 413, 419, 421, 423, 500, 550, 600, 603, 607, 605, 614, 622, 745, and 753 each paid \$8.25 in water, \$8.80 in sewer, \$35.91 as the sewer base fee, \$2.93 as meter replacement fee, and \$8.98 in water base fee. However, the city redacted the names associated with those accounts, and did not specify which properties are currently occupied.

Other properties paid more. For example, the property at 513 Davy Lane showed current billing of \$126.25, while the property at 560 Davy Lane showed current billing at \$300.32.

Businesses keep going
Despite the pandemic, a handful of businesses in Wilmington got new owners in 2020.

Right across from the iconic Gemini Giant is a recognizable car dealership. But that business got a new owner in 2020.

The Lombardi dealership was purchased by Arnie Bauer Buick GMC, which has been serving the Matteson area for 75 years.

The Lombardi name has been on a car dealership in Wilmington since 1958, when Jim Lombardi's grandfather



IN SEPTEMBER Dave Simpson became the new owner of Riverfront Lanes in Wilmington. The Chicago native, who moved to Wilmington from Missouri, appreciates the support shown by customers while dealing with the pandemic.

Nick purchased the business from the Butcher Brothers. Lombardi, who was the Chamber of Commerce Business Person of the Year for 2019, started working in the shop washing cars and sweeping floors after school when he was 15, then became an apprentice to the technicians. He began selling vehicles in the summer of 1987, at which time he went to Northwood University and studied dealership management and marketing, and ran the business since 1992.

Arnie Bauer took over the Lombardi dealership on Jan. 29. The doors remained open, the shop continued to service customer vehicles, and all of Lombardi's employees were kept on during the change.

In late summer, David Simpson became the new owner of Riverfront Lanes when the sale was finalized on Sept. 1.

A native of the north side of Chicago, Simpson has bowling in his blood, and has worked in the industry for most of his life.

Like other business owners across the country, the biggest obstacle for Simpson currently is operating during a pandemic. Simpson said he and staff are carefully following the guidelines laid out by the state.

Simpson said he'll eventually focus his time and energy on remodeling and making the bowling alley into a more modern center.

Valle's Produce Market Corporation purchased the Wilmington grocery Belletti-

Foods on Oct. 1, determined to give the area an improved shopping experience.

Siblings Maria and Kevin Valle, along with their aunt Ana Sarmiento, are the new owners, and intend to keep the name and employees at the grocery store. Valle's Produce Market originated in Berwyn 10 years ago, and the family soon added a second location in Berwyn including a taqueria featuring authentic Mexican cooking. Two years ago, they opened a third store on West Jefferson Street in Joliet.

In late May the Joliet store suffered extensive damage during a night of street violence. But the neighborhood showed its support with a GoFundMe campaign that raised nearly \$30,000. Family and friends rebuilt the store and it quickly reopened.

Their Wilmington store will be their fourth and largest location.

Previous owner Kirk Belletti said he is grateful for the employees and customers who patronized the store the past 33 years.

The Belletti family purchased what was Baron's Foods in 1987, and at one time operated four Belletti Foods stores — the first was located in Coal City. Kirk was a third-generation independent grocer who wound up the owner of the Seneca and Wilmington stores after his father retired.

He sold the Seneca store in 2011 to focus on Wilmington as one of the last independent operations in the region.



A SURVEY SENT TO Wilmington residents indicated that folks would be in favor of removing the Kankakee River dam. But, there are no immediate plans to move ahead with such a project. Mayor Roy Strong said the next step is to work with the state.

Triangle Mini Storage gives notice of disposal

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of Disposal and Possile Sale

To: Josh Lambert, Alex Harris, Tiffanie Szabo and Marsha Talbot

Notice is hereby given that a possible sale or disposal of personal property will take place as allowed by the IL Self Storage Facility Act 770 ILCS 95.

This property includes 1992 Chevy 1500 pick up vin #2GCEG19Z7N1239433 and household goods.

It is in space numbers 162, 246, 271 and 360 at Triangle Mini Storage, 24700 W. Stripmine Rd., Wilmington, IL 60481.

Sale, either individually or by lot, or disposal will take place on:

Date: Saturday, Jan. 16, 2021

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Location: Triangle Mini Storage, 24616 W. Stripmine Rd., Wilmington, IL 60481.

This notice is being given by Anthony Miceli of Triangle Mini Storage.

Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2020 and Jan. 6, 2021.

Attorney Fisher files Gladitsch estate notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

In the Matter of the Estate of Michelle Denice Gladitsch, Deceased. Case No. 20 P 941.

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Michelle Denice Gladitsch of Eagan, Minnesota and Wilmington, Illinois. Letters of Office were issued on December 15, 2020 to John S. Busca as Independent Administrator.

The estate will be administered without court supervision, unless under Section 28-4 of the Probate Act any interested person terminates independent administration at any time by mailing or delivering a petition to terminate to the clerk.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at Will County Court House, 14 West Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, within 6 months from the first publication date of this Notice, which is on or before June 23, 2021, or if mailing or delivery of this notice from the personal representative is required by Sec. 18.3 of the Probate Act of 1995, the date stated in that Notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.

Dated: December 15, 2020.

John S. Busca, Independent Administrator

Jeffrey L. Fisher, Attorney at Law, Attorney No.: 06184265, 207 South Water Street, Wilmington, IL 60481. (815) 476-7635. Email: jeff@fisherberardilaw.com

Published in the Free Press Advocate Newspaper on December 23 & 30, 2020 and January 6, 2021.

Adrienne Benet Studio files as new business

PUBLIC NOTICE

Assumed Name
Publication Notice

Certificate 33737 was filed in the office of the County Clerk of Will County on December 21, 2020 wherein the business firm of Adrienne Benet Studio, located at 406 Moen Ave., 1b, Rockdale, IL 60436 was registered; that the true or real name or names of the person or persons owning the business, with their respective post office address, is as follows:

Owner Name: Cynthia C. Martin

Owner Address: 406 Moen Ave., 1b, Rockdale, IL 60436

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and Official Seal at my office in Joliet, Illinois this 21st day of December, 2020.

Lauren Staley Ferry
Will County Clerk

Published in the Free Press Advocate, Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2020, Jan. 6 & 13, 2021.

Attorney Fisher files Hutson estate notice

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

In the Matter of the Estate of Donnie B. Hutson, Deceased. Case No. 20 P 614.

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of Donnie B. Hutson of Joliet, Illinois. Letters of Office were issued on December 15, 2020 to Christopher Alan Hutson as Independent Executor.

The estate will be administered without court supervision, unless under Section 28-4 of the Probate Act any interested person terminates independent administration at any time by mailing or delivering a petition to terminate to the clerk.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at Will County Court House, 14 West Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois 60432, or with the representative, or both, within 6 months from the first publication date of this Notice, which is on or before June 23, 2021, or if mailing or delivery of this notice from the personal representative is required by Sec. 18.3 of the Probate Act of 1995, the date stated in that Notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.

Dated: December 23, 2020.

Christopher Alan Hutson, Independent Executor

Jeffrey L. Fisher, Attorney at Law, Attorney No.: 06184265, 207 South Water Street, Wilmington, IL 60481. (815) 476-7635. Email: jeff@fisherberardilaw.com

Published in the Free Press Advocate on Dec. 23 and 30, 2020 and Jan. 6, 2021.

McCullum petitions for name change

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION TO CHANGE THE NAME OF Glenda R. McCullum to Glenda Rae Wright-McCullum. Case No. 2020MR 002690.

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned on behalf of herself, Glenda R. McCullum, adult, shall appear in the Will County Court Annex Building, 57 N. Ottawa St., Joliet, IL 60432 courtroom #A236 at 9:00 a.m. on the 8th day of February, 2021 before the judge assigned to hear said matter, and then there present a petition requesting the name of Glenda R. McCullum be changed to Glenda Rae Wright-McCullum.

Glenda R. McCullum
Published in the Free Press Advocate on Wednesday, December 16, 23, and 30, 2020.

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher
Marney Simon, editor

Happy New Year!

Dean A Shepherd, AAMS®
Financial Advisor
311 W Baltimore St
Wilmington, IL 60481
815-476-6856

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

Bringing in the New Year 1879



TIME WAS....
Sandy Vasko

There is no doubt that this year's New Year's Eve will be the quietest in my life time. At a time when most look forward to what the new year will bring, this year the future is cloudy, and many are fearful that the worst is yet to come. But gentle readers, we must move forward. If history tells us anything, it is that this too shall pass.

Even in good years, New Year's means different things to different folks in different places. Some want to party, some want to take stock, some want to make predictions. As 1878 came to a close, Will County was of two minds as well. In Joliet, a Mardi Gras atmosphere prevailed, while in Wilmington people were taking stock and fearing what the next year might hold.

In Joliet a New Year's tradition had been established. Sleights were decked out in a most elaborate way, some being designed for only this occasion. Then the gentlemen

of the town, a who's who of important business men, got on the sleights, drank, played cards, and visited homes along the way, where the ladies met them, wined and dined them then sent them on to the next home.

The Joliet Weekly Sun gives a full description of the 1879 parade. "New Year's Day has come and gone, glimmering among the things that were. It will be long remembered as the gayest and most happy day for many years in Joliet. The number of gentlemen callers was more numerous, and the rigs (sleights) were more diversified, elaborate and grotesque than on preceding years."

The Sun goes on to describe a few of the "rigs." "Two mules covered with gaily decorated cloths, bearing the inscription, "Happy New Year!" and "The boys are coming!" In the sled was the colored footman in charge of beating a large bass drum as the procession passed from one house to another."

"Then came a four-horse sleigh, 25 feet in length and 10 feet wide, the floor of which was nicely carpeted and seats covered with buffalo and wolf robes. In the center of the sleigh was a round table on which was placed several boxes of cigars. The sleigh was elegantly trimmed with ever-

greens, and from the four corners, and the arches at both ends, were small American flags."

"The log cabin design was certainly one of the best rigs. It was a log cabin on runners. The house was covered with a regular shaped roof, through which came a chimney. A bay window on each side gave all the light required for the boys as they amused themselves smoking and playing euchre as they moved from one open house to another."

"To complete the procession came the clown, mounted on a sturdy mule from whose neck was suspended a large cowbell. The clown was the life of the whole party, and at whose whistle the party responded as promptly as soldiers do at the command of their captain."

On that same day, in Wilmington there was no parade in the street. There were no gay parties or oyster suppers, no rich men with cigars, in fact, looking at the Wilmington paper you would hardly know that a holiday had just passed. Instead we read;

"On yesterday morning the thermometer marked 22 degrees below zero at 6:30 a.m."

"Frozen to death - Poor old Jeremy Brennan's death is at once a practical temperance lecture and a timely warning to

all who are addicted to the accursed of God habit of drunkenness."

"The holidays have passed off quietly enough and now our people will grapple with the cares of the New Year."

"Sam Camp and Chris Barnhart came out ahead in a big pigeon shoot on New Year's at the driving park. There were nine contestants."

"On next Thursday let it be remembered comes off the sale of the Kankakee Company's property at this place. Let our solid men turn out."

The last entry was the most important one and the cause of why there was no New Year's rejoicing. The Kankakee Company, who five years earlier had built 5 new dams and locks, dredged the mill race, and promised prosperity to all, had gone bankrupt. It took with it the hopes of the business men and in many cases their money as well. Many in town had purchased stock in the company, some purchased heavily.

Without maintenance by the Kankakee Company the wooden dams and locks that created slack water to Wilmington would eventually decay. And when they did, Wilmington could no longer brag that she was a canal town, just another stop on the railroad.

Audit

Agency had total revenues of \$35,688. Of that, \$32,180 was received via grant funding.

• Motor Fuel Tax — Total revenues in FY20 for the MFT fund, which is a tax paid at the pump and distributed to the city by the state, were \$214,158.

The city also earned a Drug Free Community grant in FY20 of \$144,360. Of that funding, \$109,568 was applied to public safety efforts. The rest of those funds remain in that special account.

In the water and sewer funds, the city collected \$1.1 million in water service fees and \$1.05 million in sewer service fees.

After expenses both the water and sewer oper-

ating funds, while they stayed inside their allotted budgets, ended the fiscal year with deficiencies of revenues under expenses.

The water operations fund saw a total of \$132,810 more in expenses than revenues, while the sewer operations fund ended the year with \$437,012 more in expenses than revenues. The largest expenditures in both funds are for wages, insurance and taxes, as well as utilities and gas.

The sewer fund also paid out \$194,059 in loan interest on the city's IEPA loan for the wastewater treatment plant.

The city's total net position at the end of FY20 was \$28 million.

The full audit can be found on the city's website, www.wilmington-il.com, under the Government Finances tab.

Volunteers needed to take down display

Volunteers are needed for clean up/disassemble of the Christmas walk on the North Island Park, Wilmington on Friday, Jan. 1 and Saturday, Jan. 2, beginning at 10 a.m.

The Wilmington Lions Club welcomes help either or both days. The only thing that would delay the take down would be rain. Please dress for the cold.

Wilmington High School students of the month



WHS JUNIORS Zach Bergman and Corban Larson represent their class as the students of the month for December.

STUDENTS OF THE MONTH for December were recently recognized at Wilmington High School. Each month faculty and staff pick two students from each grade level who performed random acts of kindness or helped out in a big way. From the senior class are Caden Dunkin and Eren Overmyer.



WHS FRESHMEN Lexi Liaromatis and Alex Boynton are the December students of the month.



WHS SOPHOMORES Kade Hopwood and Mya McCubbins were selected as students of the month for December.

SEND SCHOOL NEWS TO news@fpnusa.com

Final week to give to Chamber elf boxes

The year 2021 will be here before we know it and we'll be reflecting on the successes and challenges the Christian Help Association (CHA) faced in 2020. As you know CHA had to restructure our donations, packing and giveaway because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Anytime a new challenge presents itself we focus on doing two main things: jump into restructuring normality and asking for help from the community.

With many new challenges from 2020, December looked very different than years past, especially for CHA. We have seen an increase of individuals needing hands-on support while maintaining social distancing protocols, along with joys and perseverance from afar thanks to

our strong community.

As 2020 is wrapping up, I encourage you to join our mission and to donate to CHA. Monetary donations can be mailed to Christian Help Association, 635 S. Main St., Wilmington, IL 60481 or dropped it into a Chamber of Commerce Elf boxes located in various stores in Wilmington.

The boxes will be picked up next week. This money will be used to offset expenses from providing Christmas to approx. 250 families in Wilmington. Please make checks payable to Christian Help Association.

For questions, contact me, Cyndi Ragain, (815) 474-7521.

With Heartfelt Thanks

The family of Michael Stroud expresses our deepest expressions of appreciation to everyone who called, sent flowers, cards, food, and any other gestures of comfort and kindness during the loss of our loved one. A special Thank You to Michael Medlin who spent time with our family giving us comfort and officiating his service and burial. It was incredibly beautiful. Mike and I know Michael would have been proud of your kind and beautiful words. We will always be grateful to you, you did a wonderful job. To Matt Baskerville of Baskerville Funeral Home who is one of the kindest human beings we have ever known, for taking care of everything for us with such dignity and grace. It is so extremely hard when you lose one of your children because your love is beyond infinity and it's out of order of how we feel things are supposed to be, but none of us know when God is going to call us home whether it be a child, grandchild, friend, a cousin, a nephew or a brother. The hurt and pain never stops aching in our hearts, you just learn after an awfully long time to live with it. It never goes away and it's never accepted but the love and kind words from others helps you push through it. It gave us great pride to see how loved Mike was, not only from his family but everyone whoever had the pleasure of meeting and knowing him. He will always be loved and greatly missed.

Thank You all for your kindness.
The Family of Michael C. Stroud

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Full of pork projects

SHADOW LAKES—Congress just passed a stimulus bill that's suppose to be for the American citizen, but there is so much pork in this bill that it gives money to foreign nations and some other useless projects like over \$1 million to examine how lizards walk on a treadmill and \$2 million for a headset to track eating habits in humans. Congress cannot seem to pass any type of bill without wasteful spending. This stimulus bill is about 6,000 pages and all that was needed was a stimulus bill with about 20 pages. This 6,000 page bill was put across for a vote in Congress with only six hours for members of Congress to read, which is impossible. Nancy Pelosi was in charge and once again Nancy used her idea that you have to pass a bill to find out what is in the bill. Once again the taxpayers take a back seat to foreign nations and special interest groups and someone should explain how helping foreign countries and special interest groups with their pork projects isn't in anyway helping Americans. The Democrat party strikes again, maybe the Democrat leadership should be put on a treadmill for examination like lizards. Say goodbye to your wallet.

Vote them out

BRAIDWOOD—Braidwood faces a 2 million dollar deficit. Well how about cutting the police chief's salary? And the city administrator's salary? No administrator in this town has ever been paid as much as what is being paid now. Two banks have left town and did you do anything to stop it? Now we have no bank whatsoever. Are you doing anything to bring a bank into town? You need to rid the city of your code enforcement because they do nothing except harass people. They allow you, Mr. city administrator, to run a construction business out of your home with the unsightly construction equipment lining your driveway. The people of Braidwood need to wake up and vote these morons out of office. All they do is suck money out of the town and do nothing for you and I don't know when you're going to wake up. You need to vote next time instead of putting these people back in. Thank You.

No more war

WILMINGTON—Can someone tell me what happened to the war on Christmas?

Something to hide?

GARDNER—I have a question. Why don't these Democrat-controlled states in the swing states turn over the voting machines to Rudy Giuliani? After all they claim they were honest. So if they were honest why don't they turn them over to be investigated? My name is Walter.

Wonderful recognition

WILMINGTON—Sports reporter Shawn Long has been writing some fine articles about Dream Teams in various sports for Coal City, Reed-Custer, and Wilmington. As a retired teacher, current coach, and Wilmington High School alumnus, my favorite article that he has written so far is about the Wilmington High School girls basketball team and Coach Eric Dillon. The girls team was awarded first place in the entire state in academics for Class 3A. Not wins and losses but academics. What a wonderful recognition! Administration and teachers assisted in this award but it was the students and their parents who made it happen. I have always believed that student-athletes should be recognized in that order: Student first and athlete second. I applaud these extraordinary student-athletes and wish them well in their future endeavors. Wilmington School District and the town of Wilmington should be very proud of these girls!

Todd A Lockwood, Wilmington

Start counting

Since you left-wing liberals had a lie count for President Trump, there is no reason we can't start counting the lies from Biden and Harris and they have already started. Kamala Harris stated during an interview a couple months ago that she would never take a vaccine that Trump had anything to do with because she didn't trust anything he did. Well, I see she already has her sleeve rolled up and can't wait to get the vaccine that, without the leadership of President Trump, we would still be years away from getting if you liberals had been in charge. I can only image the regulations you

liberals would have put in place that would have brought the process to a crawl instead of WARP SPEED that President Trump was able to achieve. Will Kamala apologize for her comment? NEVER! Liberals don't apologize when they are dead wrong, they just take credit for whatever they were wrong about. So let the count begin: The lie-o-meter is at one for Kamala and the inauguration hasn't even happened yet. Can't wait to start counting the lies coming out of Biden's mouth. I'm not sure the lie-o-meter can go that high.

Collateral damage

WILMINGTON—Democrats dislike Republicans so much that they'll do as much as possible to cause the Republican party trouble and heartache. But they are also causing the same problem for U.S. citizens. They don't care as long as they can destroy the Republican party while the taxpayers can be labeled as collateral damage. The one thing they do like about the Republican American citizens is their tax money so they can fill their wallets and aid foreign nations while they live a life of luxury and disregard any plea to help taxpayers. All Democrat politicians want is power, even to the point they will try to totally destroy the USA to achieve their goals of being dictators like the communist countries. We should thank all the people who voted for all the free stuff that is going to foreign countries and special interests groups and not the American citizen. Sap does not only spill out from trees.

Christmas spirit bright

WILMINGTON—The hubby and I took a drive Christmas eve to see the lights around town. In all the years we have done this never before have we enjoys all the decorations so much. It seems more people put up Christmas displays this year and it lift our hearts. May God Bless our town, it's the reason we love living in a small town.

Respect, respect

SHADOW LAKES—The other day on The View, Whoopi Goldberg, was chirping about some man who did not call Jill Biden, Doctor. She went on and on about how we should have respect for her title, and for being the First Lady. The same day I was changing channels, and low and behold there was Jimmy Kimmel. He showed a clip of our First Lady, Melania and she was reading a book to some small children. He cut the clip short and criticized her speech, her accent. His comment was, "what were the words she said?" Where was the respect for our First Lady? After this, you want me to respect the left? I think not.

Always, Margot Lane

School heroes

WILMINGTON—I would like to say thank you to district 209U staff from administration to bus drivers, but especially to our wonderful teachers. You all have gone above and beyond to give our kids as normal of a life as possible. Other school districts have been out of the classroom since last March, but you all went back into the classrooms for our kids, giving them the opportunity to get a good education. I want to say a special thanks to Mrs. Swisher and Mrs. Utz. I am beyond grateful to you both. May God bless each and everyone of our heroes.

Trump's lies

BRAIDWOOD—He said coronavirus would "go away without a vaccine." You bought it, but it didn't. While other countries got the pandemic under control and avoided large numbers of fatalities, the virus has killed more than 330,000 Americans, and that number is still climbing. He said he won't have time to play golf if elected president. But he has made more than 250 visits to his golf clubs since he took office – a record for any president, including more trips during the pandemic than meetings with Dr. Fauci. The total financial cost to America? More than \$136 million. He said he would repeal the Affordable Care Act, and replace it with something "beautiful." It didn't happen. Instead, 7 million Americans have lost their health insurance since he took office. He has asked the Supreme Court to strike down the law in the middle of a global pandemic with no plan to replace it. He said he'd cut your taxes, and that the super-rich like him would pay more. He did the opposite. By 2027, the richest 1 percent will have received 83 percent



of the Trump tax cut and the richest 0.1 percent, 60 percent of it. But more than half of all Americans will pay more in taxes. He said corporations would use their tax cuts to invest in American workers. They didn't. Corporations spent more of their tax savings buying back shares of their own stock than increasing workers' wages. He said he would boost economic growth by 4 percent a year. Nope. The economy stalled and unemployment has soared to the highest levels since the Great Depression. Just over half of working-age Americans are employed, the worst ratio in 70 years. He said he wouldn't "cut Social Security like every other Republican and I'm not going to cut Medicare or Medicaid." His latest budget includes billions in cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. He promised to be "the voice" of American workers. He hasn't. His administration has stripped workers of their rights, repealed overtime protections, rolled back workplace safety rules, and turned a blind eye to employers who steal their workers' wages. He promised that the average American family would see a \$4,000 pay raise because of his tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations. But nothing trickled down. Wages for most Americans have barely kept up with inflation. He promised that anyone who wants a test for Covid will get one. But countless Americans still can't get a test. He said hydroxychloroquine protects against coronavirus. No way. The FDA revoked its emergency authorization due to the drug's potentially lethal side effects. He promised to eliminate the federal deficit. He has increased the federal deficit by more than 60 percent. He said he would hire "only the best people." He has fired a record number of his own cabinet and White House picks, and then called them "whackos," "dumb as a rock," and "not mentally qualified." Six of them have been charged with crimes. He promised to bring down the price of prescription drugs and said drug companies are "getting away with murder." They still are. Drug prices have soared, and a company that got federal funds to develop a drug to treat coronavirus is charging \$3,000 a pop. He promised to revive the struggling coal industry and bring back lost coal mining jobs. The coal industry has continued to lose jobs as clean energy becomes cheaper. He promised to help American workers during the pandemic. But 80% of the tax benefits in the coronavirus stimulus package have gone to millionaires and billionaires. And at least 21 million Americans have lost extra unemployment benefits, with no new stimulus check to fall back on. He said he'd drain the swamp. Instead, he's brought into his administration more billionaires, CEOs, and Wall Street moguls than in any administration in history, and he's filled departments and agencies with former lobbyists, lawyers and consultants who are crafting new policies for the same industries they used to work for. He promised to protect Americans with pre-existing conditions. His Justice Department is trying to repeal the entire Affordable Care Act, including protections for people with preexisting conditions. He said Mexico would pay for his border wall.

The wall is estimated to cost American taxpayers \$11 billion. He promised to bring peace to the Middle East. Instead, tensions have increased and his so-called "peace plan" was dead on arrival.

Guy Jones

Paid to riot

SHADOW LAKES—Regarding the person who wrote into the sound-off column wondering why there were so many riots after Trump was elected, and since Biden has supposedly been elected there haven't been any. Well, you must be a total idiot because George Soros has funded the majority of these riots and sent people in who don't even live in those cities or states because he opposes Trump. He paid for it. He's a multi-billionaire so why do you think the riots haven't happened with Biden being supposedly elected?

Dan Hill

Double standard

WILMINGTON—I totally agree with the sound-off comments in the Dec. 23 issue. There is another gas station in town that does not adhere to the masks. The assistant manager never has a mask on and probably 98% of the customers who go in and out don't wear masks even though it is posted on the door that no entry is allowed without one. They also have a sign up stating a person could be fined for not wearing a mask. Why put up all these signs if nothing is going to be done? It's confusing why the mayor feels it's OK for the businesses to ignore the rules and not enforce the masks but yet city hall is shut down to the public. To me that's a double standard like you can take your germs all over town but don't bring them to city hall.

Good riddance

I will be so glad when "President Cartman" is out of the White House.

Republicans hide

WILMINGTON—After reading last week's sound-off column I am totally convinced the Russians have infiltrated certain people and they are spewing Russian propaganda all over the place. So semis came during the night with suitcases filled with ballots which are removed from the suitcases and put through voting machines over and over again. The Supreme Court justices are against Trump. Really? Trump didn't sign the stimulus package leaving millions of Americans without help when they needed it the most. At the last minute Trump says \$2,000 and Nancy Pelosi says yes, we will vote on it. Where are the Republicans? Oh I know, they are too busy having Christmas parties and out playing golf. So Trump plays golf while millions of people are hurting and thousands of people every day are dying from Covid. Now that's the truth so believe that.

Strips should go

COAL CITY—Now that the I-55 construction is done from Reed Road north how about coming back and removing these annoying white strips across the Interstate? They need to be removed. They make a lot of racket.

Commentary

State politicians had it pretty good during 2020

BY ERIC FISHER
PUBLISHER

I wonder if 2020 was as effortless for Illinois lawmakers as it looks? Best I can tell, they met in session just 17 days during the year.

The Democrats in charge canceled most of the spring legislative session and all of the Fall Veto session under threat of the coronavirus. Thus, our State Reps. and Senators each got their \$69,464 base pay (which included a \$1,628 pay increase in 2019), for spending 75% less time in Springfield.

How glorious it must be to get a full salary for just 17 days of work. If only the rest of us in Illinois could have had such a year.

Instead, we've been masking up and heading to work knowing that if we don't show up we won't get paid. At least that's the case for those who haven't lost their job due to Gov. J.B. Pritzker's orders to close the doors on restaurants and other non-essential businesses.

Business owners are being forced into furloughing good employees and taking cuts in pay. It's simple: No

work, no pay but that doesn't apply to Illinois lawmakers. During this year of pandemic, we've learned that no matter what, a lawmaker's salary is guaranteed.

What's even more frustrating is knowing that lawmakers in Illinois are the fifth-highest paid in the nation and the highest-paid among those not considered full-time, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

NCSL classifies Illinois state lawmakers as "full-time lite," meaning they serve smaller districts and work shorter sessions (70-day average) than full-time lawmakers, but are highly paid, employ large staffs and spend at least 80% of their job on legislative work.

Along with a \$69,464 base, Illinois lawmakers are paid \$10,000 stipends if they chair a committee. For example Senator Sue Rezin (38th, Morris) serves on a handful of committees and is paid \$83,100. House Rep. David Welter (75th, Morris) is being paid \$73,400, Senator Patrick Joyce \$63,700, same for House Rep Lindsay Parkhurst who left to become a judge.

On top of that, each is given per diems, mileage reimbursements and other perks.

States where lawmakers make more than Illinois include California, New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan. Those are states with full-time legislators.

The Illinois Policy Institute recently pointed out that Illinois lawmakers' salaries exceed the state's median household income of \$61,229, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That just doesn't seem fair for 17 days in session.

Consider too that the national average for state lawmakers is \$38,434. Neighboring states like Indiana and Iowa get a real bargain paying their lawmakers a base of \$26,490 and \$25,000, respectively. On average Iowa lawmakers meet 100 days, that's a whole month longer than they do in Illinois.

No wonder Iowa and Indiana are unlike Illinois in owing \$5.2 billion in unpaid bills. If only we could get more productive days out of our lawmakers they might settle issues like the coronavirus spending, a \$4.8 billion budget deficit, the spike in property taxes,

fair mapping, \$203 billion in pension debt, term limits, unfair tax increases, the list is endless.

You would think during a time of crisis state lawmakers would double the need to hash out our troubles. Before they adjourned in late May they met while social distancing. They could have done that during the fall veto session too but leading Democrats called off the session blaming it on the threat of COVID.

It seems as though the Democrats, with a super majority trifecta in Springfield, have left all the decision-making up to Gov. Pritzker. I'm not certain that's a good idea for a second-year rookie during a time of pandemic. I suppose if things go wrong they can just blame him.

The Illinois Policy Institute recently wrote about the General Assembly Retirement System, and how it is costing taxpayers millions in annual bailouts. According to the IPI, it contains less than 15 cents for every dollar needed to pay future benefits. When taking those costs into account, Illinois taxpayers already pay their lawmakers 2.5 times over—once for their salaries and then the

equivalent of 1.5 times salary for lawmakers' pensions.

In total, lawmaker compensation costs Illinois taxpayers more than \$32 million a year, the Policy Institute said.

Seems like a heavy price to pay for 177 state lawmakers who met for just 17 days.

I'm not picking on state lawmakers. I wouldn't want their job (maybe I would for just 17 days). I suspect every one of them would argue their job requires a full-time commitment. That's what happens when things are so screwed up in Springfield you can't receive a FOID card for months or speak with anyone about receiving unemployment benefits.

I say it's time lawmakers roll up their sleeves, get vaccinated and get down to work. Draft legislation allowing for sessions to be held remotely. If grade school students can learn remotely then lawmakers should be able to work that way too. At least then we'd feel like we were getting our money's worth.

Midewin reveals lineup of 2021 sessions

In celebration of 25 years of restoration of grassland habitat and service to people, the USDA Forest Service's Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie will host a variety of free public programs. A fascinating array of natural resources topics will be featured, including highlights that have helped shape Midewin NTP since 1996. Celebrate milestones like the first spotting of nesting bald eagles and more.

National Forest Foundation President and Chief Executive Officer Mary Mitsos will be master of ceremonies in a virtual celebration with keynote speaker Bill Kurtis on Feb. 10 at 6 p.m.

"Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie has been a priority for the National Forest Foundation since 2012, and we are delighted to be a part of the celebrations around Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie's 25th anniversary," Mitsos said.

Activities and events will be announced throughout 2021. The following is the schedule of webinars planned from January through May.

SESSION 1: Midewin NTP: A Haven for Grassland Birds and More

January 5, 6 p.m. On National Bird Day, we will focus on how a dream is being realized to increase sustainable habitat for native Illinois grassland birds and more.

SESSION 2: Happy Anniversary Midewin NTP
February 10, 6 p.m.



Courtesy photo by Bill Glass

BALD EAGLES NEST at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. A series of special edition Silver Anniversary webinars will feature milestones in grassland habitat restoration that have been experienced in the past 25 years, including the first sight of a pair of bald eagles.

Journalist and prairie restoration advocate Bill Kurtis will give a keynote speech in a Silver Anniversary celebration program sponsored by the National Forest Foundation.

Two-time James Beard Award-winning Executive Chef Sarah Stegner of Prairie Grass Café will demonstrate wellness cooking with prairie ingredients. NFF President and CEO Mary Mitsos will be master of ceremonies.

Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8383838383>

SESSION 3: Midewin NTP: Caring for the Land and Serving People.

March 3, 6 p.m. World Wildlife Day: A special focus on some of the USDA Forest Service subject matter experts who have made a difference

over the past 25 years. **SESSION 4: Midewin NTP: 25 Years of Volunteers and Partners**

April 22, 6 p.m. Earth Day: A close look at essential pieces in the restoration puzzle: Volunteers and Partners.

SESSION 5: Pollinating America's Prairie: We've Only Just Begun Looking Back and Planning Ahead for the Next 25 Years.

May 20, 6 p.m. World Bee Day and American Wetlands Month: A special focus on "pollinating" prairie restoration now and in the future with a look at the roles of NFF and USDA FS Youth Conservation Corps programs and more.

Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie was established on February 10, 1996 by the Illinois Land Conservation Act. Over time, land where the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant was instrumental during WWII, the Korean War and more, has been transferred from the U.S. Army to the USDA Forest Service.

Approximately 18,500 acres of land have been transferred so far. Four key objectives for management of the land are identified in the ILCA legislation, including: (1) Restoration; (2) Recreation; (3) Agriculture; and (4) Research and Education.

"This is a long-term prairie and grassland restoration process," said Midewin Prairie Supervisor Wade Spang. "All along, people of all ages

and interests, plus the reliance of the land to provide plant and animal habitat, have been what has made Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie a treasured landscape. This prairie is special, and I hope that you can join the celebrations by participating in the

educational and interpretive activities planned throughout 2021."

To register for all sessions except for the Feb. 10 program, please send us an email: SM.FS.Midewin_RSVP@usda.gov or call: (815) 423-6370.



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Pritzker orders more than \$700 million in spending cuts

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — Gov. JB Pritzker announced more than \$700 million in spending cuts, calling it a "first step" in closing a \$3.9 billion revenue shortfall in the current fiscal year's budget.

As part of those cuts, Pritzker said his office is negotiating with employee labor unions to identify \$75 million in personnel cost reductions, which could include furloughs, and that he is establishing a work group to identify possible closures of Department of Corrections facilities due to lower inmate populations.

"These cuts reflect the first phase of our path forward, doing what is within my powers, unilaterally and without the legislature," Pritzker said during a news conference in Chicago. "This is going to be tough. And as my ongoing conversations with General Assembly leaders would indicate, there is a great deal of work the legislature must do when it convenes next month."

The plan includes hiring freezes at several state agencies as well as reductions or freezes in several grant programs at the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Natural Resources. It also includes a freeze on school maintenance capital grants, which are funded from casino gaming revenues.

It also calls for delaying a scheduled rate increase for home health aids who provide in-home and community-based services to the elderly through the state's Community Care Program.

In addition to the spending cuts announced Tuesday, Pritzker earlier announced a plan to borrow \$2 billion through the Federal Reserve's Municipal Liquidity Facility, a program launched earlier this year to help state and local governments close budget gaps that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

But that still leaves more than \$1 billion in savings that will have to be identified, unless Congress authorizes a relief package that includes aid to state and local governments, something that Republican leaders in Congress strongly oppose.

Pritzker said about \$2 billion of this year's shortfall is due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has drastically cut into state revenues. The rest, he said, is part of an ongoing "structural" deficit in the state budget, one that he had hoped to fill with passage of his proposed graduated income tax amendment, and he lashed out at Republicans in Illinois who worked to defeat that proposal on the Nov. 3 ballot.

"It's been two years since Republicans announced their wholesale opposition to the

'Fair Tax,' and it's been 40 days since the election, and they have yet to produce any viable answer for balancing the budget," Pritzker said. "They worked and spent endlessly to defeat the best option Democrats put on the table. And after all their bluster, it turns out that Republicans have no plan at all, to put the state on a firm fiscal foundation."

But GOP leaders in the General Assembly responded quickly, arguing that the budget shortfall is the result of Democrats being unwilling to cut spending earlier.

"The Governor can blame others all he wants for the state's financial mess, but the fact of the matter is this is a bed of his own making," Senate Minority Leader-elect Dan McConchie, of Hawthorn Woods, said in a statement. "Voters fundamentally rejected his graduated tax proposal because of their lack of trust in state government, which stems from years of Springfield increasing taxes and ignoring the reforms that Republicans have put on the table time and time again."

House Minority Leader Jim Durkin, of Western Springs, said the deficit was built in to the budget that the Democratic-controlled General Assembly passed in May, which was predicated on passage of the tax amendment and the state receiving about \$5 billion in federal aid that so far has not materialized.

"Governor Pritzker, (Senate) President (Don) Harmon and (House Speaker) Mike Madigan were repeatedly warned about the dire shortfalls in the fantasy budget that relied upon the passage of the graduated tax and a 'fingers crossed' hope for a federal bailout," Durkin said in a statement. "Instead of living within our means, they attempted to trick voters into raising taxes, and were sorely rejected by Democrat, Republican and Independent voters across the state."

The state's largest public employee labor union pushed back on the cuts. Roberta Lynch, executive director of AFSCME Council 31, issued a statement saying the union "is firmly opposed to any demands that unfairly target state employees."

"Undoubtedly our state faces a severe fiscal crisis and action is urgently needed. However, it is grossly unjust to suggest that frontline state employees who have already sacrificed so much in our current public health crisis should bear an outsized share of the burden of fixing the state's fiscal crisis as well," she said in the statement. "Moreover, it is counterproductive in the extreme to target these employees at a time when the need for state services and the demands on state government are greater than ever."

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 Paula Randolph <small>paula@loribonarekrealty.com 239.257.9413</small>	 Abbey Roseland <small>abbey@loribonarekrealty.com 815.274.1336</small>	 Sarah Saltese <small>sarah@loribonarekrealty.com 815.579.9555</small>	 The Vigna Team <small>Mike and Laura Vigna 815.735.3872</small>	

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How to find affordable housing for seniors

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Dear Savvy Senior,
Are there any resources to help seniors find and pay for senior apartments? My aunt, who's 75 years old, needs to find a new place to live but has very little money. What can you tell me?
Searching Sarah

Dear Sarah,
Finding affordable senior housing options can be difficult depending on where your aunt lives. Senior apartments for some retirees are a good option, and you'll be happy to know that there are a number of government programs that

can help out financially. Here are some tips that can help you and your aunt find a low-income senior apartment that fits her budget and living preferences.
Start with HUD
There are several different government programs available today that can help individuals who qualify to locate and pay for housing, including:

- * Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8): This program allows you to find the housing you want. The government provides the amount allowed by your voucher to the landlord each month.
- * Privately owned subsidized housing: HUD helps some apartment owners offer reduced rents to low-income tenants.
- * Public Housing: These communities are generally apartment buildings or com-



SAVVY SENIOR
Jim Miller

plexes that are overseen by a city or county public housing agency, and are available to low-income families, the elderly and those with disabilities.

* Low-Income Housing Tax Credit: This program provides housing to low income families and includes assistance page at HUD.gov/topics/rental_assistance.
You can also search for low-income housing at senior living sites like After55.com and SeniorHousingNet.com.
If you or your aunt don't have internet access or have troubling maneuvering the internet, you can also locate nearby affordable housing options by calling your local housing authority < call 800-955-2232 to get your local number. If your aunt lives in a location that spans multiple counties, check with the housing authority in each one to compare.
How to Choose
If you or your aunt find several apartment choices that fall within her budget, she should consider what's important to her. She may want housing that's close to family, religious organizations, senior centers, or places she visits regularly, like grocery stores, parks or gyms.
Or, if she has a disabling condition, it may be especially

critical for her to find a living space that has easy access to important services like senior transportation and health care centers.
In your housing search, you may also come across some red flags that indicate a retirement community wouldn't be a good fit for your aunt. Keep an eye out for extra fees that may be applied to everyday items or perks you normally wouldn't think about like laundry service, parking or pets.
You should also make sure the apartment is in good condition and then scout out the neighborhood. Ask yourself if the community is clean and well maintained and if there is any debris or messy landscaping. If you notice anything out of the ordinary, follow up with questions before your aunt signs a rental contract.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.

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Brittany Hollis joins Lori Bonarek Realty

Brittany Hollis has joined Lori Bonarek Realty as a Realtor in its Coal City office.
Hollis has been an active Realtor since 2017. With a bachelor's degree in interior design, Hollis has served as a design consultant with industry leading companies for the last 10 years. She grew up in the surrounding area and currently lives in Coal City with her husband and two boys.
Brittany has a wide range of market knowledge and is comfortable selling homes in and around the Grundy County area. As a Realtor with Lori Bonarek Realty, Hollis now conveys her passion for real estate with her love of design to both buyers and sellers throughout each transaction. She knows just how important it is to make a house a home and her clients' wants and needs always come first.
"Brittany has a track record of great customer service and accomplished work in interior design. We are thrilled that she brings those traits to



BRITTANY HOLLIS

Lori Bonarek Realty," boasted James Ludes, designated managing broker.
Broker/owner Lori Bonarek added, "We are so happy that Brittany joined the Lori Bonarek Realty family. We look forward to working with her and we're excited to have another local agent who loves the community as much as we do and know she will be a great addition."

USF fall deans list

The University of St. Francis (USF) congratulates the following students who have been named to the dean's list for the fall 2020 semester. Students who have attained a grade point average of 3.5 or higher at the end of a semester in which they have taken at least 12 credit hours are named to the dean's list.
Area students on the list include Kathryn Gutzman, of Braceville; Kira Gleason, Bobbi Herrera, Vanessa McLean and Thomas Sforza, of Braidwood; Mackenzie Christensen, Avery Hannig, Julie Sander, Abbey Spesia and Victoria Sztapka, of Coal City; Peyton Garrelts and

Brittany Housman, of Custer Park and Savannah Jacobs, of Diamond.
Also, Clarissa Del Rio, Rachel Hunter, David Paul and Tara Tindall, of Elwood; Sabrina Baftiri, Vincent Bazzarone, Hannah Berdahl, Daniel Black, Kristine Cumba, Cassidy Flatness, Mitchell Hayworth, Jessika Kodat, Matthew Lopez, Kaitlin Smith and Meagan Warzynski, of Morris and Brad Abderhalden, Cassidy Andrews, Leah Hiles, Cameron Holman, Richard Mroz, Kendall Peatross and McKenna Quigley, of Wilmington.

Illinois leads nation in population loss since last census

BY GREG BISHOP
THE CENTER SQUARE

There's plenty of room at the inn in Illinois, as the state continues to see population declines year after year.
New census data analyzed by Illinois Policy Institute Chief Economist Orphe Divounguy show the state shrank by nearly 80,000 people in the year ending July 2020, the second largest population loss among U.S. states over the year, and nearly 22,000 more than was lost the year before.
Illinois led the nation in population loss over the decade with 253,000 fewer residents. That's the size of Naperville and Peoria combined.
This year's population decline isn't the worst in state history, but it's close. In 1945, the state's population declined by 118,000 residents.
The effects of the population declines are wide-ranging for Illinois' economy, and Illinois' taxpayers.
"You have fewer people here in our labor market so there's less quantity of workers, fewer workers, you have a lower quality of worker as well," Divounguy said. "Our housing market is also lagging other states. So we have less opportunity for those who stay in Illinois."

Divounguy said the population decline means fewer people are available to pay for increased government debt, like public sector pensions which take around a quarter of every tax dollar the state captures.
"So instead of stimulating the economy, you continue to take valuable resources and put them into this pension debt hole, you're not going to get a recovery," Divounguy said. "You're going to see continued population losses."
He advocated for constitutional pension reform, something that's been elusive at the Illinois statehouse. He also said lawmakers need to stop advancing bad economic policies, like increasing the minimum wage during an economic crisis.
"We're doing things in reverse," Divounguy said. "We're doing the opposite of what's supposed to happen in a period like this."
States with growing populations such as Iowa, Indiana, Texas and Florida have pro-growth policies that attract job creators and workers, he said.
"People are going to places where labor markets are performing, where there is opportunity and they can thrive," Divounguy said.

Pritzker says it will take time to reverse population decline

BY GREG BISHOP
THE CENTER SQUARE

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker says he's focused on reversing the state's continued out-bound migration. But a congressman says high unemployment from the governor's COVID-19 orders is likely going to compound that.
The state lost nearly 80,000 people in the year that ended July 2020, according to analysis of U.S. Census data. That's 22,000 more than were lost the year before and the seventh consecutive loss of population in the past 10 years. Illinois led the nation in population decline for the past decade at 255,000.
U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis, R-Taylorville, told WMAZ it's likely that means Illinois loses at least one seat in Congress. He said 154,000 new unemployment filers last week will

compound the state's population decline.
"And with the unemployment numbers, many of those seeking unemployment are probably going to look at an opportunity elsewhere and it's not going to help," Davis said.
Pritzker said he's being a cheerleader for Illinois to attract business, but it's going to take time.
"It takes time to turn a battleship or a aircraft carrier in the right direction and we've been doing that in the last two years and I will continue to do that," Pritzker said.
The pace of population loss accelerated under the first 18 months of the Pritzker administration.
Davis blamed statehouse Democrats that have been in control of state policy for years, increasing taxes and spending while not addressing structural deficits.

Illinois solicits computer donations from businesses, cities

BY RAYMON TRONCOSO
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — The state is soliciting computers and related equipment from individuals and companies as part of a new program that will distribute refurbished devices to low-income households.
The Computer Equity Network is a collaboration between the state, the non-profit PCs for People, municipal governments and private businesses. The program is tied to the ongoing Connect Illinois initiative based out of the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity that seeks to expand broadband access in the state.
"One of the largest gaps made even more significant in this pandemic is the digital divide," Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker said. "How can your child learn from home if you don't have internet access? How can you shop for groceries safely online if you don't have a computer? Accessing the digital world has

become essential for students, for small business owners, for patient-doctor communications, for job applications. Really there's no realm in which connecting online hasn't become absolutely necessary in the modern era."
DCEO estimates that out of 4.9 million Illinois households, more than 1.1 million currently lack computer access in their home.
According to DCEO Director Erin Guthrie, the Equity Network will host community hand-off events in all 102 Illinois counties to give away the upgraded devices to eligible families. The events will also feature on-site support from DCEO to provide digital literacy courses and options for accessing low-cost internet services.
What's outside of the state's hands, however, are the actual computers.
Illinois companies, when upgrading equipment, can donate their old technology to the Equity Network, where PCs For People will upgrade it and give it to a family in need.
Employers large and small, and like-

wise governments large and small are encouraged to donate equipment.
"It can be computers by the hundreds or just a couple here and there. It all makes a difference," he said.
Companies and individuals who give computers to the program are eligible for tax reductions under applicable regulations for property donations to charitable organizations.
PCs for People CEO Casey Sorensen said the network has currently committed to providing 20,000 computers to low-income families during the non-profit's first year operating in Illinois. Illinois residents who are eligible for free computers must be below 200 percent of the federal poverty line or enrolled in income-based government assistance programs such as free or reduced school lunch, Medicaid or SNAP.
Households looking to receive computers, or companies looking to donate their older equipment, can visit Illinois.gov/ComputerEquityNetwork for more information.

Toast to the end of 2020 with a Algonquin Cocktail

Times Square is going to look a bit different on New Year's Eve this year, just as every tourist attraction has in 2020. One thing that remains the same is Midtown Manhattan's historic Algonquin Hotel located at 59 West 44th Street. Little has changed at the landmark hotel since it opened over 100 years ago.

Writers and journalists still congregate there, a cat has free reign of the hotel, and it's the best place in town to enjoy an authentic Algonquin Cocktail.

I have a soft spot for cocktails created at and/or named after hotels. This particular cocktail is so intriguing because it combines ingredients that, on paper, looks like would never build a delicious drink. Well, that's why you make the drinks.

The Algonquin starts out as many pre-prohibition cocktails do, whiskey and vermouth in a mixing glass. It is the addition of pineapple juice that sets it apart from nearly everything else in the whiskey world. The drink was created for the hotel in 1902, and supposedly was "discontinued" during prohibition.

Nearly every whiskey distiller has an Algonquin recipe listed on their website, the version in the recipe below is the current version of the cocktail that you would be served at the hotel if you were to order one this evening.

First, a bit more about the Algonquin. There is a reason that writers and journalists have always congregated there: the hotel caters to them. Concessions have always been made to writers, publicists, and journalists, some of which are still in place today.

For several years authors on tour were allowed to stay at the Algonquin for one night in exchange for a signed copy of their latest book. The founders of The New Yorker magazine were among the many literary professionals that frequented the Algonquin, and all hotel guests receive free copies of the magazine to this day.

About the cats. Yes, cats have free reign of the hotel. The male cats are all named "Hamlet" and the female cats are all named "Matilda". Hamlet VIII is the most recent feline occupant of the hotel, Matilda III died in October 2017. The hotel also holds a feline fashion show each summer to benefit the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals.

On to the cocktail. The origins are cloudy, as is the case with many cocktails predating prohibition. The Algonquin is treated as a cocktail platform in many craft cocktail bars, a platform in which a whiskey and vermouth are chosen to mix with the pineapple juice.

Blended scotch and bourbon are often used for Algonquin service, but the hotel uses rye whiskey. Rye was more than likely the whiskey used in many pre-prohibition cocktails created in the Northeast, simply due to the fact that rye was the only option.

Bourbon was very much a "southern thing" until the 1950s, and our grandparents may have had the option of blended scotch, but



THE SUNDAY COCKTAIL
Brian Rung

Pennsylvania rye was plentiful in early 20th century New York.

If you are about to purchase rye whiskey for the first time, you're in luck! Gone are the days of Old Overholt and Jim Beam rye as the only two rye options at your local spirits retailer. It took a few years to catch up

with the bourbon boom, but the rye market is strong and quality whiskies at affordable price points can be found in stores from Philadelphia to Los Angeles.

Be prepared to spend about \$20 to \$30 on a bottle of rye depending on state and local taxes, about the same as a quality bourbon. My favorite rye is Rittenhouse, made in the Pennsylvania tradition and named for Philadelphia's famous Rittenhouse Square. Sazerac Rye from Buffalo Trace is a solid rye, as is Michter's.

When it comes to vermouth, the Algonquin has spoken: Noilly Prat Dry Vermouth. Yes, the vermouth is both brand and type specific. Many bars serve the Algonquin with sweet vermouth, and I'm sure that it is delicious, but the genuine article on West 44th street uses dry vermouth.

If you pick up a bottle of dry vermouth along with your rye, try your hand at a "dry" Manhattan. If you have a bottle of blended scotch in the cabinet, try your hand at a "dry" Rob Roy.

Unless you plan on serving a crowd, pick up the smaller 375ml bottles of vermouth as it tends to spoil quickly

upon opening. Be sure to refrigerate vermouth once it has been opened, it should keep in the refrigerator for a few days.

As for the pineapple juice, use Dole unsweetened pineapple juice. I keep the 6 oz. cans in my home bar, shake before using.

For this and other cocktails prepared in a mixing glass, add your ingredients to the glass before adding ice. This will prevent excess dilution as you measure out your ingredients. I stir Martinis, Manhattans, and other stirred drinks with larger ice cubes 21 times and it seems to yield the ideal amount of dilution.



The classic Algonquin Cocktail is built in a mixing glass and served in a chilled cocktail (Martini) glass.

Combine in mixing glass:
1 1/2 rye whiskey
3/4 oz. Noilly Prat Dry Vermouth
3/4 oz. pineapple juice
Stir with ice
Strain into chilled cocktail glass, garnish with lime wheel. Until next week, enjoy responsibly.

Critics: Stimulus package full of wasteful spending unrelated to coronavirus

BY BETHANY BLANKLEY
THE CENTER SQUARE

The \$2.3 trillion omnibus bill passed by Congress and sent to President Trump who threatened to veto it includes \$900 billion for additional coronavirus relief and is full of wasteful spending of taxpayer money on programs that have nothing to do with the coronavirus, numerous critics argue. CATO Institute's Chris Edwards points out that the bill "is an astounding 5,585 pages in length, including 544 pages for coronavirus relief, 1,915 pages for appropriations, and 3,126 pages for extensions and corrections."

"If it were printed at 11 inches per page, that's 61,435 inches or 5,120 feet," Edwards said. "Since there are 5,280 feet in a mile, the bill is almost a mile of paper end to end."

The nonprofit government watchdog OpenTheBooks.com said, "Christmas came early for Washington," and listed "just a few examples of taxpayer abuse" in the bill, including:

- \$10 million for "gender programs" in Pakistan
- \$40 million for the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
- \$10 billion to loan forgiveness to the United States Post Office

• \$14 billion for mass transit programs, \$10 billion for state highways, and \$1 billion for Amtrak

• \$15 billion for live entertainment venues, cultural institutions, and independent movie theaters

• \$82 billion to K-12 schools and \$23 billion to colleges and universities.

Open the Books CEO Adam Andrzejewski asks Americans, "Are you OK with your hard-earned tax dollars being spent like this? We are not."

Americans for Prosperity's Brent Gardner says the bill is "packed with wasteful and unrelated spending provisions," adding, "It may be the season of giving, but that does not mean lawmakers should be giving taxpayer money away recklessly. Americans deserve better."

One addition tucked in the bill is the Protecting Lawful Streaming Act introduced by Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., which targets "large-scale, criminal, for-profit streaming services, not good faith business disputes or noncommercial activities. Nor does it target individuals who access the pirated streams, knowingly or unknowingly, TV Technology reports.

Spike Cohen, retired Libertarian Party candidate for Vice President, tweeted that by

voting for the bill, Congress "just robbed you of about \$2,750 each and gave you \$600 of it back, but if you watch a pirated copy of Mandalorian you could end up in prison, unable to ever get a business license, buried in fines for the rest of your life."

"If you stream copyrighted content without permission, you're now a federal felon, punishable by jail time, fines, losing your right to vote or own a firearm, etc. But they gave you \$600 of your own money though."

The National Association of Broadcasters, which supports the bill, says it was "tailored to deter large-scale copyright piracy while ensuring that legitimate licenses are not subject to potential prosecution."

U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, voted against the bill, arguing there were "countless pet projects that will escape close scrutiny" because of the bill's size.

"Had this bill been solely focused on re-opening the economy, getting Americans back to work, and jump starting a recovery, it would have had my enthusiastic support," he said.

The "5,600-page spending package fails to make any meaningful spending cuts and instead advances the interests of the radical Left, special

interests, and swamp lobbyists" and paves the way for

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OBITUARIES

Marijayne Baudino

KINSMAN—Marijayne Baudino, 87, formerly of Kinsman, passed away peacefully, Friday, Dec. 25, 2020 at Park Pointe Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center in Morris.

Born Aug. 14, 1933 in Morris, Marijayne was a daughter of Everett and Gertrude (Dearth) Matthews. She was raised in Coal City and graduated from Coal City High School with the class of 1951. On Dec. 30, 1951, Marijayne married Jack Baudino in Assumption Catholic Church in Coal City, and together they made their home and raised their family in rural Kinsman. She was a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Kinsman, where she was involved with the Altar and Rosary Society. Marijayne worked numerous years at the Hallmark store in Morris, but will most be remembered as an exceptional wife and mother who enjoyed family meals and spending time together with family on the holidays.

Survivors include her four children: David (Barb) Baudino, of Mazon; Duane Baudino, of Frederick, OK; Jim (Mary) Baudino, of Morris and Steve (Michelle) Baudino, of Verona; 7 grandchildren: Lori Baudino, of Morris; Carrie (Brent) Sulzberger, of Verona; Nick (Kelly) Baudino, of Verona; Eric (Kelli) Baudino, of Mazon and Brant, Brody and Paige Baudino, all of Verona; 9 great-grandchildren: Shae, Tyler, Zack, Jada, Ava, Colton, Jaxon, Liam and Alli, and one brother-in-law, Joseph T. Phillips, of Carbon Hill, as well as numerous nieces and



nephews. Marijayne was preceded in death by her parents, husband Jack on Dec. 13, 2016; grandson, Brad Baudino; sister, Margaret "Pat" Phillips; brother, Nelson (Pat) Matthews and brother-in-law and sisters-in-law, Pete (LaVerne) Baudino, Connie (Bill) Frye and Dorothy (John) Welch.

A private family visitation was held at Reeves Funeral Home in Coal City, and a Mass of Christian Burial followed in Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Kinsman. Reverend Stanley Drenniak presided, and Marijayne was laid to rest in Braceville-Gardner Cemetery with her late husband, Jack.

Pallbearers were Marijayne's grandchildren: Lori, Carrie, Nick, Eric, Brant, Brody and Paige

Those wishing to view the funeral services virtually, may watch the recorded Mass of Christian Burial online after Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2020. A link for the event is available on Marijayne's memorial page.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Marijayne's memorial page online through social media by logging onto: www.ReevesFuneral.com/obituary/Marijayne-Baudino.com

Funeral services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves Funeral Homes, Ltd. in Coal City.

Steven C. Fannin

MORRIS—Steven C. Fannin, 71, of Morris, passed away Dec. 25, 2020 due to complications of kidney disease.

He was born in Camp Dix, KY on Feb. 8, 1949, the son of Lennie and Opal (Gilliam) Fannin. Steve graduated from Morris Community High School. He received a football scholarship to attend Culver-Stockton College in Canton, MO, where he pledged the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity. He also received his masters in education from Illinois State University as well as completed all coursework towards a doctorate in education. He married Mary Sabatini on Dec. 29, 1978 at St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Spring Valley, IL.

Steve began his career as a teacher at Minooka Community High School, where he also coached football. He was then hired at Hall High School in Spring Valley as a science teacher and football and wrestling coach. He then served as principal of Hall High School until 1992, when he was hired as the superintendent of Freeburg Community High School, in Freeburg, IL. In 1997, Steve returned to his alma mater and became the superintendent of Morris Community High School. He successfully and honorably finished his career in education at Morris, retiring in 2007. He was active in the Morris Rotary Club, the American Cancer Society, where he chaired the Relay for Life for multiple years, and numerous other community organizations. He was inducted into the Culver-Stockton College Sports and Education Hall of Fame. In his retirement, he also served as the Wauponsee Township Supervisor.

He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Mary; three children: Adam, of Morris; Stephen



Michael (Misun Kim), of South Korea and Molly (Samuel Alcaarez), of Chicago; grandchildren: Lyla, Amelia and Benjamin, of South Korea and Maxine, of Chicago. He is also survived by six siblings: Clara Scaman and Dr. Shirley Fannin, of Morris; Gerald Fannin, of Orlando, FL; Phyllis Wheeler, of Marseilles, IL; Carol Jean Rose, of Plano, TX and Valerie Fannin, of Burbank, CA.

Steve was preceded in death by his parents, Lennie and Opal Fannin, formerly of Morris and his sister, Lynn Less, formerly of Reseda, CA.

Funeral services will be held Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2020 at 12 noon in Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, 600 E. Jackson St. in Morris. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated with Reverend Jason Stone presiding and Deacon Paul Jung assisting.

Those wishing to participate in Steve's funeral service online are welcome to join the live-streamed service beginning at 12 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2020. This virtual service is accessible through a link available on Steve's memorial page.

Burial will be in Mount Carmel Catholic Cemetery in Morris.

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the online guest book, upload photographs, and share Steve's memorial page online through social media by logging onto: www.ReevesFuneral.com/obituary/Steven-Fannin

Funeral services and arrangements have been made under the direction and care of Reeves Funeral Homes, Ltd. in Morris.

Martha McCutcheon

PONTIAC—Martha (Marty) Skonetski McCutcheon, 97, of Pontiac passed away at her residence on Dec. 27, 2020 surrounded by her family.

Marty was born in Pontiac on June 18, 1923 to parents, William (Shorty) and Mabel Rose Campbell. She graduated from Pontiac High School in 1941. Marty married Walter Skonetski of Dwight in 1944. They made their living farming in Dwight for many years and later moved to Wilmington. They were married for 38 years. During this time Marty kept busy teaching Sunday School and Vacation Bible School at the Danish Lutheran Church in Dwight and also teaching sewing to girls in the 4-H Club.

Marty later married Virgil McCutcheon in 1990. They lived in Pontiac all their married life. They spent a part of their retired life in helping others in the Disaster Relief Program.

Marty was a Christian first and foremost. She loved the Lord. She was either attending church services or helping at one of the church functions. She was famous for her pies. Later in



life she spent much of her time knitting and crocheting hats and scarves to be given away to the less fortunate and helping in the food pantry at the church.

Surviving are two children, Janice (Ed) Harseim, of Morris and Randy (Annette) Skonetski, of Wilmington; five grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren who she loved to spend time with and especially doing crafts with. She is also survived by one sister, Dorothy West, of Bossier City, LA.

Marty was preceded in death by her two husbands, four sisters: Fay Robotham, Geraldine Ramsey, Mary Etta Augsburger and Patricia Faust and one brother, William Campbell.

Cremation rites were accorded. The family will have private services at a later date. Memorials can be made to the First Baptist Church Food Pantry of Pontiac or to the donor's choice.

Jacqueline Tulley

WILMINGTON—Jacqueline Ann Tulley, Ph.D., 60, of Wilmington, passed away on Dec. 23, 2020 at home, with family by her side, after a two year courageous battle with colon cancer.

Jacqueline was born on Nov. 24, 1960 to Donald E. and Joan T. (nee Haley) Tulley. She was raised on the family farm and was very much a farm girl. She helped her dad driving the tractors, feeding the hogs, walking the beans, taking care of the ponies, family dog, and the unending kittens. She picked apples, pears and cherries for her mom and grandmas, and she always had time to go down and play in the creek.

Jacqueline graduated from St. Rose Parochial Grade School and Wilmington High School with the class of 1978. She earned her bachelor of science degree in nursing from Lewis University. From there she embarked on her lifelong learning in the career of nursing. She was a Trauma Nurse Specialist in the emergency department for over 20 years at Loyola University Hospital in Maywood. During that time, she earned her master of science in nursing and her Acute Care Nurse Practitioner - Board Certified license, specializing in cardiology, both from Loyola University. Jacqueline enjoyed her career in cardiology with Advocate Health, but always made time to go back and work shifts as a trauma nurse at Loyola. It was there, combined with her knowledge and years of experience, that she began teaching and coaching new nurses. Jacqueline became interested in pursuing nursing education and became an adjunct professor at St. Xavier University for the School of Nursing and Health Sciences. From there, she became an Associate Professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Nursing teaching nurses that were pursuing their master's degree. She continued her own studies at Loyola University and earned her doctoral degree in nursing. Jacqueline dedicated her entire career caring, healing, and teaching.

Jacqueline enjoyed the outdoors. In her free time, she was an avid jogger, biker and



swimmer. Jacqueline liked a good book, a good movie, a nice glass of wine, and watching the Chicago Bears. She loved baking her chocolate chip cookies and taking countless dozens of them to the nurses on the oncology unit of Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

Jacqueline cherished nothing more than her three children. Whether it was watching them in sports or listening to them sing, she worshiped every minute. She took great pleasure watching them blossom into young adults and pursuing their own successful careers. She often said, "I love my kids, they are so amazing."

Surviving are her beloved children: Matthew Saulters, of Wilmington; Garrett (Ashley) Saulters, of Virginia and Kiara Saulters, of Los Angeles, CA; parents, Donald and Joan Tulley, of Wilmington; sisters, Sharon Prusank, of Yorkville; Donna (Robert) Ball, of Lakeland, FL and brother, Stephen (Vanessa) Tulley, of Plainfield, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held Monday, Dec. 28, 2020 in St. Rose Catholic Church in Wilmington. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated with Reverend Sebastian Gargol officiating.

Burial was in Mount Saint Patrick Cemetery in Wilton Center.

Pallbearers were: Ross Marshal, Dan Christmann, Stephen Tulley, Kyle Tulley, Steve Liaromatis and Ty Anderson.

Preferred memorials may be made as gifts in Jacqueline's memory to the American Cancer Society for Colorectal Cancer Research at www.cancer.org/cancer/colon-rectal-cancer

Family and friends are encouraged to sign the guest book, upload photographs and share Jacqueline's memorial page online through social media by logging onto: www.BaskervilleFH.com/obituary/Jacqueline-Tulley

Funeral services and arrangements were made under the direction and care of Baskerville Funeral Home in Wilmington.

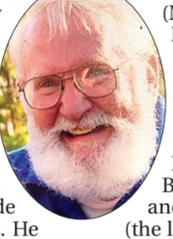
Lester Heberer

BRAIDWOOD—Lester "Les" Heberer, 76, of Braidwood, passed away suddenly Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2020 at Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee.

Born Feb. 1, 1944 in Belleville, IL, he was the son of Walter and Gertrude (nee Range) Heberer. He was a graduate of Freeburg High School in 1962. He was a member of the Immaculate Conception Church in Braidwood, where he was proud to teach eighth grade religious education for numerous years. He was also a fourth degree knight with the Knights of Columbus. Les came to Braidwood as an expansion to the Peabody Coal Company and stayed on to become a dragline operator, later becoming an agent for Country Companies.

At the age of 40, he went back to college and received an associate's degree in computer systems management and began working for AT&T Bell Labs, Rush Presbyterian St. Lukes Hospital, and then eventually retired from Riverside Medical Center in 2006. Les was in the second class of the State of Illinois paramedic training program and was the Braidwood Fire Department's first group of paramedics. He served the community for over 50 years as a member of the Braidwood Fire Department, lastly becoming the President of the board of trustees. For years, he was known in many communities for his faithful role of Santa, eventually hanging up his Santa hat in 2017. Les maintained a life of faith, work and volunteering, but one thing he enjoyed most, was sitting down and reading a good book.

Surviving are his beloved wife of 55 years, Kathleen "Kay" (nee Nahas) Heberer, who he married Aug. 7, 1965 at the Immaculate



Conception Church; two sons, Matthew (Melanie) Heberer, of Morton, IL and Phillip (Pamela) Heberer, of St. Augustine, FL; seven grandchildren: Luke, Brett, Jake, Hutch, James, Jeremy, and Lindy Heberer; two brothers, Edward (the late Gina) Heberer, of New Port Richey, FL and Kenneth (Leone) Heberer, of Braidwood; numerous nieces, nephews, and their families; sister-in-law, Anita (the late William) Scheer, of Braidwood and brother-in-law, Fred (Betty) Nahas, of Plainfield, IL.

Preceding him in death were his parents and sister-in-law, Betty Jo (Robert) Weigt.

Visitation for Les will be at the R.W. Patterson Funeral Home and Crematory, Braidwood, Friday, Jan. 1, 2021 from 3-7 p.m. All attendees are required to wear face coverings, follow social distancing guidelines, and due to the capacity requirements, please be brief with your condolences to allow other guests to pay their final respects.

Private Mass of Christian Burial will be held for the immediate family at the Immaculate Conception in Braidwood. Interment will follow at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Braidwood.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in his name to the Immaculate Conception Church or the Braidwood Fire Department would be appreciated.

For more information and to visit his online guestbook, log on to www.rwpatterson-funeralhomes.com or find them on Facebook.

R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory, 401 E. Main St., Braidwood is in charge of arrangements.

Jacqueline Andreina

HERSCHER—Jacqueline "Jackie" Marie Andreina, 75, of Herscher, formerly of Altorf, reunited with her husband Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2020. She was born March 5, 1945 in Geneva, NY, the daughter of Francis and Darlene (Benoit) Mason. Jackie married Ernest "Pooch" Andreina on June 10, 1966 in Kankakee. He preceded her in death on Oct. 24, 2004.

Jackie's great-great-grandfather, Damause Benoit Sr. and great-grandfather, Damause Benoit Jr. helped settle the area and were instrumental in starting Maternity B.V.M. Catholic Church in Bourbonnais. She was a volunteer at Harbor House. Jackie was an avid reader, enjoyed playing Scrabble with her sisters, and loved going on winter trips to Florida. Anyone that knew her knew she had a one-of-a-kind personality. Jackie was a parishioner of Maternity B.V.M. Catholic Church in Bourbonnais.

Surviving are four children: Rob (Nancy) Andreina, of Cadiz, KY, formerly of Braidwood;



Sherri Andreina-Kane, of Bourbonnais; Darren Andreina, of Herscher and Mitch (Sarah) Andreina, of Herscher; 10 dotting grandchildren: Caryn, Rachel, Rene, Robert Jr., Emily, Tonia, CJ, Jeno, Isaac, and Elliot; five great-grandchildren, six sisters: Barbara Lee, Pat Rivera, Cynthia Thorne, Ruth Shokley, Sue Rogers and Frances Ferrera and several nieces, nephews, and cousins.

In addition to her husband, Ernest "Pooch" Andreina, Jackie is preceded in death by her parents, one granddaughter, Carla Mae DeBoard and one sister, Mary Rogers.

Private family services will be held.

Burial will be at All Saints Cemetery in Bourbonnais.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the family wishes.

Family and friends can sign her guestbook at www.clancygernon.com.

Arrangements were made by Clancy-Gernon Funeral Home in Bourbonnais.

Marguerite Siron

GOOSE LAKE—Marguerite "Peggy" Siron (nee Faletti), 65, of Goose Lake, passed away Saturday, Dec. 26, 2020 at the Joliet Area Community Hospice Home in Joliet.

Born June 19, 1955 in Morris, she was the daughter of Dominic and Levita (nee Schultz) Faletti. Peggy enjoyed many things in life, such as watching Chicago Bears games, cooking, baking, and she had a love for all animals. She welcomed all walks of life and enjoyed spending time with her family and friends. Peggy was especially excited awaiting on the birth of her first grandchild that will be arriving soon.

Surviving are her husband of 22 years, Ronald Siron, who she married July 1998 in Morris; one son, Matthew (Heather Hill), of

Ottawa, IL; step-daughters, Sandy (Robert Bennett), of Plainfield, IL and Vickie Siron, of Tinley Park, IL and one brother, Rocky (Pat) Faletti, of Goose Lake.

She was preceded in death by her parents. Cremation rites have been accorded and private inurnment will be in Mount Olivet Cemetery, Braidwood.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations to the family would be appreciated.

For more information and to visit her online guestbook, log on to www.rwpatterson-funeralhomes.com or find them on Facebook.

R.W. Patterson Funeral Home & Crematory, 401 E. Main St., Braidwood is in charge of arrangements.

pregnancyresourcecenter

All of our services are offered at no cost to the client:

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- Options education
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How to eat organic goods without spending too much

Dear EarthTalk: My New Year's resolution is to eat healthier. Which fruits and vegetables are worth spending extra money on for organic varieties? Likewise, is it worth it from the standpoint of health to also pay a premium for organic meat, cheese and eggs?
P. McAdams, via email



breaking the bank.

As for produce, many conventionally grown fruits and vegetables don't contain or pass along significant amounts of pesticides or other noxious chemicals.

The non-profit Environmental Working Group (EWG) suggests only buying organic for their so-called "dirty dozen" list of common produce items that do tend to harbor larger amounts of chemicals: strawberries, spinach, nectarines, apples, peaches, pears, cherries, grapes, celery, tomatoes, sweet bell peppers and potatoes.

Going for organic varieties

of these fruits and vegetables is one of the most affordable ways to eat healthier because the price premium on organic produce is in many cases negligible given more consumer demand driving increased production and supply.

On the flip side, EWG also produces the "Green Fifteen" list of produce that tends to be contaminant-free even when not organic: avocado, pineapple, onion, papaya, frozen sweet peas, sweet corn, eggplant, asparagus, cauliflower, cantaloupe, broccoli, mushrooms, cabbage, kiwi and honeydew melon.

As for animal products, organic varieties can only bear the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) "Organic" stamp if they are "raised in living conditions accommodating their natural behaviors (like the ability to graze on pasture), fed 100% organic feed and forage, and not administered antibiotics or hormones."

As to whether organic meat is better for your health, don't bet on it. A 2015 Spanish study found that consumption of organic meat does not diminish-and in fact might slightly increase-the risk of getting cancer. That said, other research has shown that organic meat contains more healthy Omega-3 unsaturated fats-this results from the animals eating grass not grain.

Another good reason to go organic if you eat meat is ethics: Conventionally raised livestock are subject to confinement and overcrowding while being dosed with antibiotics to prevent the spread of bacterial infection in their midst. The same calculus applies to organic versus conventional dairy products: organic milk and cheese may contain more Omega-3s but otherwise the health differences are negligible.

It certainly is a balancing act today to shop with your family's health and your own



TOMATOES ARE ONE of the produce aisle items on Environmental Working Group's "Dirty Dozen" list of fruits and vegetables that are worth spending extra on for organic varieties to spare yourself exposure to pesticide residues.

conscience in mind while not breaking the bank. The bright side of this conundrum is that we do have so many healthier choices overall these days, and it's easier than any time in the last 75 years to avoid chemicals

in your food if that's the way you want to roll.

EarthTalk® is a 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. Send questions to: question@earth-talk.org.

Forest Preserve's show features rookery, turtles and bird feeding tips

Take a virtual journey to the islands of Lake Renwick Preserve, view Blanding's turtles up close and learn some winter bird feeding tips during the December episode of the Forest Preserve District of Will County's nature show, "The Buzz."

The show will air live on the District's Facebook page at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 30.

During the program, host Suzy Lyttle, a Forest Preserve program coordinator, will take viewers on a journey starting with a kayak trip to view the nesting structures on the islands at Lake Renwick Heron Rookery Nature Preserve in Plainfield.

The islands are off-limits to humans year-round to let birds nest and raise their young, so this is a unique chance to see the wooden nesting structures built by the Forest Preserve up close. Lyttle will describe the work that went into erecting the structures while she explores the island and the site's old nests.

Next up, Lyttle will head over to view the District's batch of baby Blanding's tur-



Courtesy photo by Chad Merda

DURING THE DECEMBER episode of "The Buzz," Suzy Lyttle, a program coordinator for the Forest Preserve District of Will County, will take viewers on a virtual kayak trip to view the nesting structures on the islands at Lake Renwick Heron Rookery Nature Preserve in Plainfield. The show airs at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 30, on the District's Facebook page, [Facebook.com/WillCoForests](https://www.facebook.com/WillCoForests).

tles, which are being raised as part of a regional effort to help this state-endangered species.

Forest Preserve program coordinator Jen Guest will describe what it takes to raise the turtles so they can be released into the wild next year, and viewers can watch as she feeds them.

Finally, Lyttle will tour the District's largest bird feeding

station and Bob Bryerton, a Forest Preserve program coordinator, will share his tips on what works best to attract birds in the winter. Now that temperatures have dropped, feeding birds can provide countless hours of fun bird-watching activities from the warmth of your home.

For more information visit [ReconnectWithNature.org](https://www.ReconnectWithNature.org).

New minimum wage rates set to take effect on New Year's Day

Illinoisans will ring in the New Year with an additional increase in the minimum wage to \$11 an hour, and the Illinois Department of Labor is encouraging employees to watch their paychecks to ensure that time worked in 2021 is paid at the new rate.

Governor JB Pritzker signed legislation into law in 2019 providing a path to a \$15 minimum wage by 2025. Minimum wage earners received two increases in 2020 to \$9.25 an hour on Jan. 1 followed by an increase to \$10 an hour on July 1. The minimum wage will continue to increase an additional \$1 an hour each Jan. 1 until it reaches \$15 an hour in 2025.

"We want to make sure that workers earning minimum wage are aware that the \$1 increase should be reflected in their pay checks for any time they work after the first of the year," said Michael Kleinik, director of the Illinois Department of Labor. "While we fully expect employers will pay the new wage, we also

want workers to be aware of the change."

Prior to the 2020 increases, the last time Illinois increased its minimum wage was more than a decade ago in 2010 when it was raised to \$8.25. Cook County has a higher minimum wage than the state, currently \$13 an hour. The current city of Chicago minimum wage is \$13.50 an hour for small employers (4 to 20 employees) and \$14 an hour for large employers (21 or more employees).

A recent study by the Illinois Economic Policy Institute at the University of Illinois indicated that more than 1.4 million adult hourly workers in Illinois make less than \$15 per hour.

The new law maintains provisions for employers to count gratuities to offset wages for workers such as food servers who regularly earn tips. Tipped employees may be paid 60 percent of the hourly minimum wage. These workers must still earn the minimum wage after receiving tips or the

employer must make up the difference.

Workers who are under 18 years old and work fewer than 650 hours in a year will earn a minimum wage of \$8.50 per hour beginning Jan. 1. The youth minimum wage rate will gradually rise to \$13 an hour by 2025.

All Illinois employers are required to post the "Your Rights Under Illinois Employment Laws" in a conspicuous location on the premises of the employer where notices to employees are customarily posted. The color poster, which also covers other Illinois labor laws, can be found at <https://www2.illinois.gov/idol/Employers/Pages/posters.aspx>.

Employees with problems regarding the minimum wage can file a complaint with IDOL.

New minimum wage rates beginning on Jan. 1 of every year are 2021-\$11, 2022-\$12, 2023-\$13, 2024-\$14, 2025-\$15.

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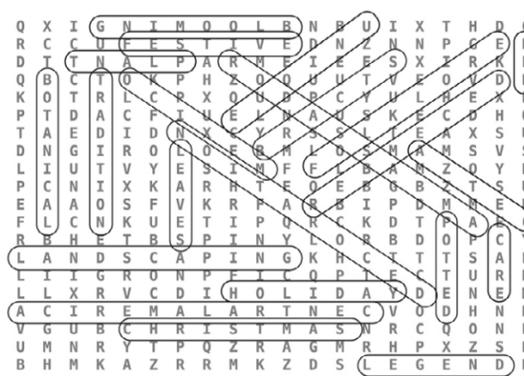
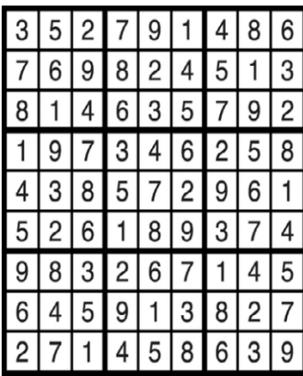
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- The Coal City Courant
- The Free Press Advocate
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Or charge by phone 815-476-7966 or 815-634-0315
Be sure to mention New Year's Special



Coloring contest underway for those ages 3-6

Wilmington VFW Post 5422 Auxiliary is sponsoring a patriotic coloring contest for boys and girls ages 3 through 6.

Entry forms to be colored by youngsters from Wilmington and Braidwood can be picked up at the VFW, 557 W. Baltimore St., Wilmington.

Winners of the local contest will be entered into a District competition. The name, age and address of child must be written on the back of each entry.

Deadline to enter is Jan. 15, 2021. For more details call Kathy at 815-823-4324 or 815-926-2651.

CLASSIFIEDS

CLASSIFIED DEADLINES

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

Deadlines

Classified Display
The Prairie Shopper - Thurs., 4 p.m.
Paid Newspapers - Fri., 5 p.m.

Classified Word Ads
All Newspapers - Thurs., 4 p.m.
Paid Newspapers - Mon., Noon

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1 wk.- \$21; 2 wks.- \$25;
3 wks.- \$28; 4 wks.-\$30
\$1.20 Extra per line for bold or caps on classified

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

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

APARTMENTS FOR RENT

Braiddwood, Upstairs, 2BR apartment, newly remodeled, \$725 mo. \$1,000 security deposit. Laundry on sight, references and lease. No pets. 815-365-2829 leave message. cc51b-2a

PROMOTIONAL OFFER - take \$75 off 1st month rent. Coal City, ground level, 2BR, 1BA, living room, dining room, laundry room w/washer-dryer hookup in your apt. Lots of closet space, outdoor storage shed, small deck & patio. 1 year lease, NO PETS, \$795/mo. Call 815-634-2294. cc51a-1b

FARM EQUIPMENT

For sale by sealed bid. 1990? Case International 885 tractor with TA 26 loader. 5,255 hrs. Can be seen at Maine Township building. Gorman and Braceville RD. Bids will be taken until Jan. 8, 2021 and will be opened Jan. 11, 2021. The board has the right to reject any bid. Send bids to: J. Jackman 4100 S. Gorman Rd., Gardner, IL. 60424. ch51b-1a

HELP WANTED

Wilmington Positions Open - Kelly Services currently seeking Packaging Technicians and Forklift Operators in Wilmington IL. Pay: \$15.75 - \$16.75 depending on shift and position. Please call or text 786-266-2489. cc51b-2a

HELP WANTED

ACCOUNTANT NEEDED
Vanfab, Inc and Van Voorst Lumber Company are currently looking for an Accountant to ensure the accuracy of financial documents, as well as their compliance with local laws and regulations, prepare tax returns and ensure that taxes are paid properly and on time, and oversee the Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable Department. This job will require a strong background in accounting, preferably a CPA, although candidates that possess the required skills and experience will be considered. The ideal candidate will have strong numerical proficiency, organization, great problem-solving abilities, and excellent use of logic. If you, or someone you know is qualified and interested in this position, please send your resume to rachel@vanfab.com or mail your resume to Vanfab, Inc 1 Center Street, Union Hill, IL 60969 or call Rachel at 815-426-2180. cc52a-53b

Van Duyn Motel Part-time housekeeper needed 2 or 3 days a week. Part-time maintenance person needed 10 plus hours a week. Call 815-476-2801. ca52a-2b

Executive Director of Wilmington Park District. Head Administrator that oversees the management of Wilmington Park District Agency. For a complete job description and how to apply, visit jobs.ilipra.org ch52b-1a

HELP WANTED

CONTROLLER NEEDED
Vanfab, Inc and Van Voorst Lumber Company are currently looking for a Controller to oversee the accounting operations as well as produce, maintain and manage accounting/financial reports. This job will require a strong background in accounting, preferably a CPA, although candidates that possess the required skills and experience will be considered. The ideal candidate will have strong numerical proficiency, organization, great problem-solving abilities, and excellent use of logic. If you, or someone you know is qualified and interested in this position, please send your resume to rachel@vanfab.com or mail your resume to Vanfab, Inc 1 Center Street, Union Hill, IL 60969 or call Rachel at 815-426-2180. cc52a-53b

HOMES FOR RENT

3 bedroom, 2 bath, 2 car garage rental property available February 1st. 145 N. Street in Coal City. \$1,300/mo rent. 815-768-0681 cc53b-3a

MISCELLANEOUS

Price Reduced: 8 foot Western Ultra Mount Snow Plow, good shape, currently on 2500 HD. \$1,800, obo; Rigid RP340 Pro-Press Kit, 1/2" to 2" Jaws, brand new, \$1,600. Call evenings and ask for John 815-955-0800.

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MISCELLANEOUS

Dry, seasoned oak firewood \$139, cherry BBQ firewood \$169. Wood racks \$49. The best firewood & quick, friendly service. 815-260-0108. cc50a-53b

Hall Rental - Available for parties, showers & meetings. Seats 100 people, full kitchen available. If interested call New Hope Presbyterian Church in Coal City, 815-634-8332. ch 27a-tfn

Maytag washer and Kenmore dryer, \$200 for both. Call 815-341-3757. cc53b-1a

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Large Selection of Dog and Cat Food, treats, accessories, health aids, clothing, Birthday treats, wall art, jewelry, gifts, greeting cards and Home of Fritters for Critters Pet Treats. New! Brew and Chew Dog Treats. Trinity Barkery 240 W. Baltimore Wilmington, IL 60481 815-476-5104 slewis@trinity-services.org. ch22b-tfn

SITUATIONS WANTED

Stories about local people, organizations and events. If you know a neighbor with an interesting hobby, collection or cause, give the editor a call at 1-815-634-0315 or 1-815-476-7966. tfn/47b

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Gas Fireplace Repair. 38 years experience. Licensed, insured & bonded. Call Margo at 708-712-5012 to schedule an appointment. Can repair most brands. Weekends available. Thank you. cc49b-22a

Ron's Drywall, Hang, Tape & Paint, 25 years experience. Reasonable rates including drywall repairs, plaster repairs, cracks, holes, & patches. Carpenter available by request. 815-549-5136. cc40a-2b

SERVICE & REPAIRS

Hendron Construction Interior Carpentry, Cabinet Sales & Installation, Granite & Quartz Countertop Sales, Hardwood & Laminate Flooring, 10 yard dump trailer rental for cleanouts and construction debris, prices start at \$250 per load. 815-790-1235 for more information or schedule free estimate. cc53a-7b

Julie's Remodeling Siding, soffit, roof repairs, painting, welding repairs, seamless gutters, fencing, tree removal, lawn care, Complete Handyman service! Bonded and Insured, 20 yrs., call 815-791-5731. cc28b

Mike Collins Roofing, re-shingles and modified rubber and gutter cleaning, aluminum gutter screen, blown-in insulation in attics. **INSULATION.** Get a free estimate for blown in insulation for attics from Mike Collins Roofing. Keep your house cooler in summertime and warmer in the winter. lic # 104.007296. Ask for Mike at 815-730-1303. cc41b-12a

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	2	9	1		
6				5	3
1		6			
	7				
4			2		
5			9	3	7
	8		2	6	
					4
			5	8	6
					7

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. Home of the Cowboys
7. "Hawaii Five-O" actor McBride
10. Most aged
12. Fitted with a shoe
13. Courteously
14. They form over cuts
15. Western Alaskan river
16. Aggressive men
17. Farm animal
18. Young woman (French)
19. Sixth month of Hebrew calendar
21. Short cry
22. State capital
27. Rural delivery
28. "Twilight Zone" creator

33. Gigabyte
34. Flammable hydrocarbon
36. Supervises flying
37. An actor who plays a principal role
38. Furnace for pottery
39. Fall back
40. Afrikaans word for language
41. Chinese city
44. Fleshy
45. Inventor
48. Taxis
49. A citizen of Spain
50. Important age for aging workers (abbr.)
51. Body part

CLUES DOWN

1. Chinese mountain range
2. Romanian city
3. Fishermen cast it
4. Shelter from wind
5. Sign language
6. Pigpen
7. Make sore
8. Flat metal shelves
9. Forms that say who you are
10. Cigar lovers' necessity
11. Popular cooking ingredient
12. Skin covering the head
14. Unshakable
17. Exclamation meaning "Finally!"
18. One of the wise men's gifts
20. Take away from
23. In accordance with the law

24. Nicole Kidman's husband
25. NY Giants legend
26. Utilize
29. Beloved Hollywood alien
30. Unwell
31. More destitute
32. Grinded together
35. Sun up in New York
36. Italian-made cars
38. Most sacred site in Islam
40. Rip apart
41. Go in a specified direction
42. Freshwater mussel genus
43. "___ the Man" Musical
44. One thousand cubic feet (abbr.)
45. West coast time zone
46. Mimic
47. You can get one in summer

CRYPTOFUN

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to poinsettias. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 11 = O)

A. 16 11 14 11 1 23 19 14
Clue: Vibrant

B. 16 3 1 4 20 17 5 16 20
Clue: December holiday

C. 14 13 15 18 13 20
Clue: Parts of plants

D. 21 13 16 11 1 15 17 4 11 25 20
Clue: Home adornments

Answers: A. colorful B. Christmas C. leaves D. decorations

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to poinsettias.

SBTRAC

--	--	--	--	--	--

Answer: Bracts

Guess Who?

I am a singer born in England on December 30, 1986. I discovered electronic music while in college. Rihanna is one of my influences and I sang a cover of her song "Only Girl In the World." My debut album reached #1 on the UK charts.

Answer: Ellie Goulding

POINSETTIA WORD SEARCH

Q	X	I	G	N	I	M	O	O	L	B	N	B	U	I	X	T	H	D	G
R	C	C	U	F	E	S	T	I	V	E	D	N	Z	N	N	P	G	E	D
D	T	T	N	A	L	P	A	R	M	E	I	E	S	X	I	R	K	E	
Q	B	C	T	O	K	P	H	Z	O	Q	U	U	T	V	E	O	V	D	R
K	O	T	R	L	C	P	X	Q	U	D	P	C	Y	U	L	H	E	X	R
P	T	D	A	C	F	I	U	E	L	N	A	U	S	K	E	C	D	H	O
T	A	E	D	I	D	N	X	C	Y	R	S	S	L	T	E	A	X	S	U
D	N	G	I	R	O	L	O	E	B	M	L	O	S	M	A	M	S	V	S
L	I	U	T	V	Y	E	S	I	M	F	F	L	B	A	M	Z	O	Y	H
P	C	N	I	X	K	A	R	H	T	E	O	E	B	G	B	Z	T	S	U
E	A	A	O	S	F	V	K	R	F	A	R	B	I	P	D	M	M	E	B
F	L	C	N	K	U	E	T	I	P	Q	R	C	K	D	T	P	A	E	C
R	B	H	E	T	B	S	P	I	N	Y	L	O	R	B	D	O	P	A	C
L	A	N	D	S	C	A	P	I	N	G	K	H	C	T	T	T	S	A	E
L	I	I	G	R	O	N	P	F	I	C	Q	P	T	E	C	T	U	R	N
L	L	X	R	V	C	D	I	H	O	L	I	D	A	Y	D	E	N	E	M
A	C	I	R	E	M	A	L	A	R	T	N	E	C	V	O	D	H	N	N
V	G	U	B	C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A	S	N	R	C	Q	O	N	P
U	M	N	R	Y	T	P	Q	Z	R	A	G	M	R	H	P	X	Z	S	D
B	H	M	K	A	Z	R	R	M	K	Z	D	S	L	E	G	E	N	D	D

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

AMBASSADOR
AZTEC
BLOOMING
BOTANICAL
BRACTS
CARE
CENTRAL AMERICA
CHRISTMAS
DECEMBER
DECORATION
FESTIVE
FOLKLORE
HOLIDAY
LANDSCAPING
LEAVES
LEGEND
MEXICO
PLANT
POTTED
RED
TRADITION
UNIQUE

The days of voters not caring about Madigan are over

I reached out to several House Democrats who could be considered politically vulnerable in 2022 to ask them how they plan to vote on Speaker Michael Madigan's reelection in January.

With one exception, I didn't make much headway. Much has been made about the number of Democratic women who have said they will not vote to reelect the longtime House Speaker. That's true, but it isn't yet a universal opinion.

Democratic Representative-Elect Suzanne Ness (D-Crystal Lake) may have breezed past GOP Rep. Allen Skillicorn by almost 2,300 votes last month, but her district leans Republican, a remap may not help her all that much (particularly if it's a "Fair Map" and therefore not drawn with partisan intent) and 2022 will be the first midterm election of a Democratic president.

Ness ran as a reformer and raised over a million dollars from Madigan's network. Skillicorn, for whatever weird reasons, barely campaigned and spent almost nothing. She likely won't get a pass in two years. That January Madigan vote, therefore, looms large.

"I do not have a statement

at this time regarding the election for House Speaker," Ness told me the other day.

House Republican polling showed 76 percent of her district has an unfavorable view of Madigan, with 65 percent having a "very unfavorable" opinion and only 12 percent with a favorable opinion, according to the Dec. 16 Ogden & Fry poll of 716 respondents.

Janet Yang-Rohr (D-Naperville) defeated GOP Rep. Grant Wehrli by a couple of thousand votes. Her district leans slightly Democratic at the top, but the uncertainties of the coming remap mean that nothing is guaranteed. Yang-Rohr didn't respond to multiple attempts to reach her about the speaker's election.

Rep. Katie Stuart (D-Edwardsville) has been the Democrats' only real and consistent bright spot in the area of the Metro East which has been trending Republican. Stuart defeated a Republican incumbent in 2016, but has fended off two attempts to unseat her since then.

Still, 2022 could be problematic, particularly if map-makers can't deliberately pack her district with Democrats who are stuck in soon-to-be former Rep. Monica Bristow's

district. Rep. Stuart also did not respond to an inquiry about her January intentions.

Others who did not respond included Representative-Elect Dave Vella (D-Rockford), who just barely squeaked by Rep. John Cabello and Representative-Elect Dee Avelar (D-Bolingbrook). Rep. Joyce Mason's Senator is the crusading reformer Melinda Bush and Mason (D-Gurnee) shares that district with Rep. Sam Yingling, who has said he will not vote to reelect Madigan. Rep. Mason has not responded to numerous attempts to ask for whom she's voting.

Representative-Elect Denise Wang Stoneback (D-Skokie) lives in a liberal Democratic stronghold, so she could face a primary opponent if she votes to reelect Madigan. "Right now I have no comment on this," Stoneback wrote to me the other day.

Representative-Elect Maura Hirschauer (D-Batavia)



CAPITOL FACTS

Rich Miller

also has a strong, albeit less liberal Democratic district. "I do not have a comment at the moment," she told me.

I got the distinct feeling that at least some of these folks (and plenty of others in that caucus) are hoping everything will work itself out by the second Wednesday in January, which would spare them from making such a momentous decision.

As mentioned above, I found one exception.

Rep. Mark Walker (D-Arlington Heights) was recently asked by the Daily Herald how he was voting for House Speaker. "We'll see," was his initial response.

Rep. Walker then reportedly praised Madigan for his organizational skills, but the Daily Herald also claimed he said that public servants must be held to a higher standard.

"I don't believe he'll be a viable candidate by January," Walker then said of Madigan.

The article had no explanation for why Walker said that about Madigan's viability. So, I

called him. Walker said his comment was deliberately designed to send a message to the House Democratic caucus and the sub-caucuses within it, including the Black Caucus.

"Your guy's not gonna win, come up with an alternative," is what Walker said he meant.

Whew.

To Walker's mind, anyway, the 19 public Madigan opponents in the House Democratic caucus are not going to budge. "I think the caucus ought to decide," Walker said, adding he doesn't want to see this matter go to the House floor for endless votes. "I want us to suc-

ceed as a caucus because the state absolutely needs it," he said.

Walker also believes that the days of voters not caring about Madigan are over. "I'm afraid that ship has sailed," he said.

At least somebody said something.

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

Crude oil prices nearing pre-Covid high

Illinois gas prices have risen 4.0 cents per gallon in the past week, averaging \$2.35/g Monday, according to GasBuddy's daily survey of 4,378 stations. Gas prices in Illinois are 20.6 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 23.9 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Illinois is priced at \$2.05/g Monday while the most expensive is \$2.89/g, a difference of 84.0 cents per gal-

lon. The price at the pump in Wilmington was \$2.39/g on Monday compared to Coal City price of \$2.29/g.

The national average price of gasoline has risen 0.7 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$2.25/g. The national average is up 13.8 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 32.6 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

"Average gasoline prices continue to move higher in most areas as retail gas prices

continue to follow the rising price of crude oil which remains near the highest level since COVID-19 began in March," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy.

"Seasonal factors have sat in the backseat compared to a modest recovery in demand and a healthy dose of optimism that a COVID-19 vaccine will bring normal demand levels in the coming year. For now, it's not the best news for motorists as I expect gas prices

may continue their ascent, but while it won't last forever, it's likely a sign of what's to come in 2021 - higher prices.

"The year ahead will be likely marked by recovery in the pandemic and rising demand, and for motorists interested in what's coming to the pump GasBuddy will be releasing our 2021 Fuel Price Outlook in the days ahead, which will hopefully give motorists some idea of what to plan for in terms of pain at the pump."

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WILDCAT SPORTS

Wildcats still accomplished a lot in pandemic shortened sports year

BY SHAWN LONG
SPORTS WRITER

Looking back at the year of Wildcat sports, 2020 proved to be downright unfriendly. We saw high school seniors miss out on their baseball, softball and track seasons while fall and winter athletes have remained idle.

The year started well for the boys basketball and wrestling teams as they were lucky enough to complete their seasons before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Best season in 10 years

The Wilmington boys basketball team was on a roll with a 14-18 record, marking their best season since the 2009-10 when the 'Cats won 19 of their 27 games.

Wilmington got through Reed-Custer in a 60-55 overtime win in the first round of the regional to get into the semifinals against Coal City.

In the regional semifinal, junior Ben Kreitz registered a double-double with 17 points and 10 rebounds but the 'Cats came up short to the Coalers 69-55.

Kreitz and junior Trey Shaw earned Illinois Central Eight All-Conference honors. Kreitz averaged a double-double with 15 ppg and 11 rpg. Shaw scored 13 ppg, leading the team in steals per game.

A winning record

The Wilmington girls basketball team (15-14) had their best record since the 2002-03 season when the 'Cats went 14-11 under coach Stan Roeder.

They made it to the Reed-Custer regional against Coal City but lost 50-38 even though senior Chloe Sanford scored 18 points.

Sanford and Claire Rink were named All-Conference selections. Sanford scored 365 points in her senior season, leading the team with 250 boards. Rink was second in points with 248 and rebounds with 201.

Narine, Gornik advance to state wrestling

The Wildcat wrestling team sent two-time state placer Jack Narine and Nick Gornik to state.

Narine placed fifth at 145 pounds his freshman season and sixth at 126 as a sophomore. He ended up going 1-2 at the state tournament as a three-time state qualifier.

As for Gornik, this was his first time making it to state. He drew the top wrestler in the seedings and put up a fight, but lost. He also has a lot to be proud about qualifying for state as a senior.

Four Wildcats, Narine (28-11), Gornik (28-17), Aiden Wooters (27-13) and Zach Welsh (12-8) were named All Conference.

Record broken

The Wilmington track team was able to hold their first and only track meet of 2020 before the coronavirus hit, and during that meet, freshman Chloe Proffitt shattered Kara Brock's school record for the 1600 meter run.

Proffitt crossed the finish line in 5:43.6 to fly by the old record which was 5:47.00 set back in the 2014-15 season by Brock.

COVID-19 ends spring sports season

The coronavirus became a household name in early March, just about the time spring sports was starting. Illinois Gov. Pritzker put a stop on all sports hoping to slow the spread of the virus.

Leading up to the statewide shutdown on Thursday, March 10, Major League Soccer was the first professional sport to postpone their season for 30 days.

The National Basketball Association followed their example, suspending the remainder of their games after there had been two confirmed cases of the coronavirus within the sport.

Major League Baseball did the same, placing their season on hold for another two weeks past opening day on March 26, giving them a window to play on April 9.

Then, it got to the middle and the high school levels as the Illinois Elementary Association was forced to cancel their state wrestling tournament on Friday, March 11, meaning the two individual wrestlers that Wilmington sent, Landon Dooley and Parker Adams, were unable to go compete.

Later that day, the National Collegiate Athletic Association followed suit, canceling all the remaining winter sports championships as well as the rest of the spring sports seasons. That same day the NCCA announced it would grant all-student athletes in spring sports eligibility relief,



WILMINGTON FRESHMAN Jake Castle tees off during a coronavirus shortened fall. Castle would have played football until it was moved to the spring since football was categorized as a high risk sport.

meaning they would get an extra year of eligibility.

The first local event to get canceled on covid restrictions was the annual Comet Invitational indoor track meet which was set to take place Saturday, March 12.

On Sunday, March 13, the governor announced a statewide shutdown March 17-30. All schools were closed.

After re-evaluation, the governor extended the shutdown through April 7th.

The Illinois High School Association did not cancel anything just yet but they announced on Wednesday, March 25 during a board meeting that there might be a need to extend the spring sports season once the students got back in classes on April 8.

That extension led to another extension that was set to last until the end of April so the IHSA had no choice but to play ball, remaining optimistic for a spring sports season.

For spring sports to have a chance, schools needed to be back in session by May 1 but that didn't happen. On April 17, Gov. Pritzker and the Illinois State Board of Education announced that all Illinois high schools would complete the rest of the 2019-20 term from home via e-learning. Baseball, softball and track were canceled for 2020. Senior Wildcats were denied what would have been their final season.

Some hope for fall season

On May 27 there was hope for fall sports. The National Federation of State High School Associations released return-to-play guidelines that IHSA's Sports Medicine Advisory Committee approved.

On June 17, the IHSA approved the return-to-play guidelines, giving high school athletes the go-ahead for summer conditioning.

A week later on June 22 the IHSA sent Stage 2 of the guidelines to the Illinois Department of Health for approval.

Stage 2 would give football players a chance to begin summer camps under precaution. It would give volleyball players and all other fall sport athletes the go-ahead to start summer contact drills.

Girls wrestling state

That same week during the IHSA's board meeting, they approved girls wrestling state series for the 2021-22 season. That would give the girls the right to compete in a state sanctioned event like the boys do.

Stage 2 approved

It took the IDPH until Friday, July 3 to get back to the IHSA but the Stage 2 Return to Play Guidelines were approved.

Teams with up to 50 players and coaches could begin meeting for 20 contact days through Aug. 9. Face coverings were required for volunteers and coaches but for players, it was optional for outside sports.

Major setback

Just a week later there was a report of a coronavirus outbreak at Lake Zurich High School where 10 football players tested positive for COVID-19.

That led to the governor placing new restrictions on sports where he mandated masks for indoor sports and forbid contact, meaning football 7-on-7's, volleyball, wrestling, basketball or soccer scrimmages could not take place.

Local coaches were advocating compliance. If you do what they ask you to, everything will be alright.

A questionable move

The IHSA, facing a lawsuit from angry parents who argued that fall sports were being allowed in neighboring states, turned the decision-making process over to state health agencies and the governor's office.

The IESA decided to follow suit with the governor's ruling and canceled fall middle school seasons as a precautionary measure on July 24th. The sports included in the cancellation were middle school baseball and softball.

MS fall sports saved, youth football canned

Wilmington Middle School receive good news as the state released its All Sports Guidance document that categorized baseball and softball as low risk sports. That gave the IESA clearance to reinstate fall sports.

But keeping with the theme of 2020, good news was followed with bad news as the Bobcats, Jr. Comets and Miners youth football teams were forced to cancel their seasons since football was categorized

as a high risk sport.

High risk sports moved, golf starts

High school football, volleyball and soccer seasons, categorized as high risk, were moved to the spring.

That left golf as the only fall sport open for Wildcat athletes. Golf coach Mike Wilson saw over 25 golfers try out and he had enough players to field a female team, the first time ever. While most of the Wildcat golfers were first-time players Colin James anchored the 'Cat with a below 40 average to make the All Conference team.

Travel baseball success

The Wilmington 13-U baseball travel team won a couple different out-of-state tournaments in the fall, including the Patriot Classic that took place in Indianapolis, IN. They stormed through with a 4-0 record.

Virtual champions

Wilmington seniors Paige Persic and Jenny Kucharski competed in the Powerlifting Nationals over the summer along with three other teammates. Persic and Kucharski were crowned champions at their respective weight classes in a competition that moved to strictly virtual, meaning lifters sent videos to be judged.

Dominant program

Even though the football Wildcats didn't get to play their season just yet, they made the list of having one of the most successful programs in history.

They were named to the Decade of Dominance list, having an 80% winning percentage in 2010-19 when they won over 82 percent of their games (94-20) and from 2000-09 when they maintained a winning percentage of 80%.

Hope for basketball

The IHSA SMAC was asked about the basketball season on Oct. 10 and if the players would have to wear mask to which the SMAC replied, 'it's a possibility that they might have to wear them to have a season.'

The Wilmington athletes were all in agreement, 'sports with a mask are better than no sports at all'.

On Oct. 28, a day after the governor upgraded basketball to high risk, the IHSA approved a winter sports season, putting its foot down.

The IHSA Executive Director Craig Anderson said they weren't budging.

The governor fired back, threatening to take legal action against any school who defies the state health department. That didn't stop the IHSA from issuing winter sports guidelines later that day.

No insurance no play

On Thursday, Oct. 29, the governor held a press conference, stating schools could face legal consequences if illness or injury results from playing in defiance of the state's guidance.

Only 34 schools came forth saying they'd play. Coal City, Reed-Custer and Wilmington were not one of those schools as they all announced they weren't going to be playing the basketball season until the IDPH and the governor's office gives the go-ahead.

IESA Go Fund Me

The IESA has felt the impact of the pandemic so much so that they created a Go Fund Me to keep their doors open after the lack of state tournaments nearly drained them dry of their funds to continue.

As of Monday, Dec. 21, they were nowhere near their goal of \$500,000 needed by April. If they don't get their funds by then, they'll be forced to close.

Smartest in state

The Wilmington girls basketball team finished the 2020 season with a winning record, and excelled even more in the classroom. The Lady Cats had the highest grade point average of any other team in Class 3A, earning them the state plaque.

Indefinite Pause

After the Gov. Pritzker's Tier 3 Mitigations were put in place on Friday, Nov. 20, the IHSA had no choice but to put the winter sports season on hold and that's where it has been for the last month to end 2020.

Their next meeting regarding the rest of the 2020-21 school year will take place in January.

File Photo