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YOUR FREE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2023

NUIC-West All Conference and season wrap up for girls hoops

By Trenten Scheidegger
CORRESPONDENT

The River Ridge-Scales Mound Wildcats, Stockton Blackhawks, and Warren Warriors have all wrapped up their 2022-2023 varsity basketball seasons. Looking back throughout the year, here is how each of their campaigns played out.

The Stockton Black-

hawks had a bit of a down year on the court. After getting off to an 0-10 start, it wasn't going to be easy for the Blackhawks to turn things around. The good news was things got better in the second half of the season. After back-to-back wins over Dakota and Milledgeville, the Blackhawks found some confidence. A couple weeks

later, Stockton picked up another pair of consecutive wins over West Carroll and East Dubuque. In the end, Stockton finished with a 5-24 record, which made them 5-14 in their final 19 games played.

The Blackhawks finished with a 3-7 record in Northwest Upstate Illinois-West play, which left them in fifth place in the

conference. A trio of Blackhawks were recognized with All-Conference awards as Whitney Sullivan was named Second Team All-Conference, while Morgan Blair and Olivia Keeffer each earned an Honorable Mention. Sullivan and Blair will graduate this year when their senior campaigns come to an end, but Keeffer will be back

after a solid junior season. The trio led Stockton in scoring this season as Blair finished with 7.6 points per game, while Sullivan had 5.7 ppg, and Keeffer had 5.1 ppg. Sullivan will be tough for Stockton to replace as the senior led the team in assists, three-point shooting, and free throw shooting. Not only do they lose their point guard, but one of their top scorers as well.

The Warren Warriors saw their season come to an end on Feb. 13 when they fell to the Galena Pirates in the opening round of postseason play. With the loss, the Warriors finished the year with a 16-15 overall record, while being 4-6 in the NUIC-West. One of the most impressive stretches of their season was a three-game winning streak with victories over Pearl City, West Carroll, and Stockton.

A pair of Warriors were rewarded for their play as senior, Elaina Martin, and junior, Adalynn Bohnsack were both named to the Second Team All-Conference list. The duo helped the Warriors finish above .500 on the year.

The River Ridge-Scales Mound Wildcats were one

of the top class 1A teams in the area. With a record of 26-6, the Wildcats finished the year with a .812 winning percentage. Despite beginning the year 5-0, their most impressive stretch came in the middle of the year. From Dec. 5, 2022, through Jan. 6, 2023, the Wildcats didn't suffer a single loss as they went on a 12-game winning streak.

The 2022-2023 Wildcats tied Galena for the most players on the All-Conference list with five. A trio of Wildcats were named First Team All-Conference in Addison Albrecht, Laiken Haas, and Sydney Driscoll. Both Annie Werner and Gwen Miller were named Second Team All-Conference as well. Perhaps the scariest thing about this bunch is that Driscoll will be the only graduating senior. Albrecht, Werner, and Miller are all in the same junior class of 2024. Haas is the youngest of the group as a sophomore.

The Wildcats look to return four of their five All-Conference players and will be coming off their best season in at least a decade. You can bet they will be clawing their way for another shot at the NUIC-West title in 2024.



LE-WIN/STOCKTON PANTHERHAWK WRESTLING PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Medals awarded

The Le-Win/Stockton PantherHawks wrestling team took third place in the 2023 IHSA State Dual Team Tournament. Congratulations to the PantherHawks!

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Obituaries

WILLIAM WIENAND

William "Bill" Wienand of Freeport, IL, passed away on Feb. 18, 2023, surrounded by his loving family. Bill was born on Feb. 19, 1931, in Freeport, IL. He was the son of William A. and Edith (Toelle) Wienand. Bill married Dolores Lamm on May 10, 1958.

Bill was very athletic and during his life he played baseball, softball, basketball, golf, bowling, and downhill skiing. He also coached basketball to Jr High kids at St Joseph. After graduating from Freeport High School, Bill joined the Navy and served during the Korean War. Bill loved sharing his stories of this years as a radioman on the USS Pine Island AV-12. He was a proud veteran and served on several veteran's organizations including the

Korean War Veterans, VFW, AMVETS and for years was the vice president of Stephenson County All Veterans Memorial Park. After the Navy, Bill worked for Micro Switch for over 30 years. Bill was a life-long, die-hard Cubs fan who celebrated them winning the World Series in 2016. Bill and Dolores enjoyed traveling. They traveled to all 50 states and numerous European countries. They travelled the entire Lewis and Clark trail. They took many family vacations instilling in their children the love of the mountains and traveling in general.

Bill is survived by his wife of 63 years. There are also four children, Donald (Lisa) Wienand, Deborah (David) Kaczar, James (Lauri) Wienand, and Mary (Saeed) Ahmad. There are

also 8 grandchildren, Tim, Nick and Brian Kaczar, Rebecca (Wienand) Sullivan, and Sarah, Hannah, Zachary, and Amber Ahmad. One great-grandson, Beckett William Sullivan. Also survived by a brother Greg (Barbara) Wienand. Bill was preceded in death by daughter Beth (Dave) Wahl and his parents and sisters and their spouses, Dorothy (Eldred) Cole, Betty (Glen) Mogle, Vera (Elmer) Johnson, Dolores (John) Resh and Jeanette (Delbert) Bockstahler.

Visitation was held at Burke Tubbs on Wednesday Feb. 22 from 4 to 7 p.m. A Funeral was Thursday, Feb. 23 at St Joseph Church in Freeport starting with a visitation at 9:30 a.m. with funeral at 10:30 a.m. In lieu of flowers, a memorial has been established.

GERALD GLEN GERLACH

Gerald Glen Gerlach, age 78, of Stockton, IL passed away peacefully on Sunday, Feb. 19, 2023. He was born in Sterling, IL on April 5, 1944, to the late Harold and Leona (Whittington) Gerlach. Gerald married Linda Gerlach on Dec. 30, 1966, at Christ Lutheran Church in Stockton.

Gerald was a 1962 graduate of Stockton High School. He was a member of the Warren Lions Club and the Badger State Tractor Pullers. Gerald farmed his entire life. He enjoyed tractor pulling, traveling, and driving around to look at the crops.



Most of all, he loved spending time with his friends and family.

Gerald is survived by his wife, Linda Gerlach; his son, Michael (Teresa) Gerlach; his daughters, Marcia Dubach and Lora Cross; his grandchildren, Trent (Mariah) Gerlach, Taylor (Dan) Flannery, Luke Dubach, Jack Dubach, Jason Dubach and Helen Cross; his great grandchildren, Baylor Gerlach, Chet Gerlach and Stetson Flannery; his sisters, Kathy (Dave) Dittmar

and Marian Koester; and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents; his brothers, Larry and Mike; his sister, Charlotte; his mother-in-law and father-in-law; his brothers-in-law, Robert Johnson and James Koester; and his nephews, Tim Koester, Danny VanHorn and Carl VanHorn.

Private family services will be held. A celebration of life will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers a memorial fund has been established. Condolences may be shared with Gerald's family at www.hermannfuneralhome.com.

CAROL BORCHARDT

Carol Ann (Isenberger) Borchardt, age 80, of Lena peacefully went to be with her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on Feb. 22, 2023, while at SSM Health Monroe Hospice Home after a brief illness. Carol was born in Freeport, Illinois on Sep. 19, 1942, to Thurlo and Eldora Isenberger. She graduated from Lena-Winslow High School in 1960 and worked at General Casualty Insurance company. Carol married Jack Borchardt on Aug. 31, 1962, in Lena. She was employed by various places over the years, including The Lena Nursing Home, The Lena Drive Inn, Kolb Lena Cheese factory, Corp Tire and Colony Brands.

Carol loved to travel, play cards, cook, and bake. "Grandma Carol" was known for making her grandchildren's birthday cakes specially customized to their requests. She always had her famous cookies on hand so they would be ready whenever someone mentioned being out of cookies. She treasured all time spent with her family and proudly attended all her grandchildren's activities over the years.



Together for 43 years, Carol and Jack raised four children of whom they were extremely proud. Their children are Scott (Dana) Borchardt of Lena, Brian (Marcie) Borchardt of Orangeville, Sherry (Terry) Burke and Jennifer (Jared) Sheppard all of Lena.

Grandma Carol and Grandpa Jack treasured memories made with their nine grandchildren Jared (Ashley Radloff) Borchardt of Waupaca, WI, Nick (Nicole) Borchardt and Megan (Jay Bailey) Borchardt all of Lena, Clarissa (Chris) Brown of Mahomet IL, Courtney Borchardt of Champaign IL, Carter and Camden Burke and Zavier and Mila Sheppard all of Lena. Carol's great grandchildren are Gabriel and Jordyn Brown. She was the epitome of a grandmother; unconditionally loving and helping with whatever was needed. Later in life, Carol found a special companion, Gary Hawkinson, and they enjoyed

7 years together.

Carol is survived by her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and her sister, Mary Lou Morden of Lena along with several nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends. The family would like to thank the staff at SSM Monroe Hospital, and especially the SSM Health Monroe Hospice Home for the excellent care given to her and her family the past few weeks.

Welcoming Carol to her eternal home is her husband of 43 years, Jack, her parents, Thurlo and Eldora Isenberger, along with Jack's sisters and brothers-in-law, Lois (Freemont) Short, Theora (Everett) Huenefeld and Gayle (Robert) Lobdell and many other special relatives and friends.

Visitation was held Friday, Feb. 24 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Leamon's Funeral Home in Lena. A Christian funeral service was held Saturday, Feb. 25 at 11 a.m. at Cedarville United Methodist Church in Cedarville with a luncheon to follow at the church after committal service at Chapel Hill Memorial Gardens in Freeport. A memorial has been established in her name.

NANCY MURPHY

Nancy Murphy, age 80, of Pearl City, IL, passed away on Feb. 18, 2023, at Walnut Acres in Freeport. She was born on Jan. 21, 1943, in Shullsburg, WI, to John and Ada (Evans) Rowe. She married James J. Murphy, Jr on Oct. 19, 1963, in Gratiot, WI.

She is survived by her Husband James J. Murphy, Jr, Daughter Susan (Scott) Kurth, Son James C. (Ako) Murphy, Grandchildren: Jason Ottenhausen, Kelly Ottenhausen, Jr, Tiffany (Nick Bartosik) Ottenhausen, Grand

Fur Baby Mei; Great-Grandchildren: Lilly Chapman, Alexander Medina, Braylin Ottenhausen, Zayden Carpenter, Cayden Medina, Serenity Jensen, Emily Medina, and Cylis Ottenhausen; Brother Bob (Betty) Rowe, Sister-in-Law Sharon (Daryll) Burmeister, Cindy Brinker, Nita (Gary) Gilbertson, Becky (Greg) Oschner, and Mary (Keith) Murphy-Downs; and several nieces, nephews, and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her Parents, John and Ada (Evans) Rowe, Father-

in-Law, James Murphy, Sr, Mother-in-Law, Mary D. Murphy, Brother Clifford Rowe, Sisters: Roberta Ingram, Lila Glasson, Bessie Rowe, and Dorothy Rowe; and several nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Visitation was held on Saturday, Feb. 25, from 2PM to 4 p.m., at the Schwarz Park Blvd Chapel, 608 S. Park Blvd, in Freeport, IL. Interment was at Chapel Hill Memorial Gardens in Freeport, IL. Online condolences may be shared at www.schwarzfh.com.

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Freeport Mayor Jodi Miller appointed to serve on National League of Cities' Public Safety and Crime Prevention Committee

Jodi Miller, Mayor of Freeport, Illinois has been appointed to the National League of Cities (NLC) 2023 Public Safety and Crime Prevention (PSCP) federal advocacy committee. Mayor Miller was elected to a one-year term and will provide strategic direction and guidance for NLC's federal advocacy agenda and policy priorities on public safety issues, including law enforcement, municipal fire prevention, natural disaster preparedness, and homeland security. The appointment was announced by NLC President Mayor Victoria Woodards of Tacoma, Washington.

"Public safety has been my number one priority as Mayor of Freeport," says Mayor Jodi Miller. "Freeport is not alone in its public safety and crime concerns. I'm excited to be part of a larger national discussion." As a member of NLC's PSCP committee, Mayor Miller will play a key

role in shaping NLC's policy positions and advocate on behalf of America's cities, towns and villages before Congress, with the administration, and at home.

"NLC's federal advocacy committees are a key tool for gathering insights directly from the communities that our members serve," said NLC President Mayor Victoria Woodards of Tacoma, Washington. "I am excited to have Mayor Miller serve on the NLC PSCP committee and look forward to working with her to ensure every city, town and village in this nation has the resources they need to thrive."

The leadership of this year's committee will consist of Chair Ras J. Baraka, Mayor, City of Newark, NJ; Vice Chair Rhonda Jerome, Council Member, City of North Charleston, SC; and Vice Chair Brian Kazy, Council Member, City of Cleveland, OH.

Church news

St. John's Lutheran Church

St. John's Lutheran Church, Pearl City, will celebrate the Second Sunday in Lent on March 5. A Worship Service with Holy Communion will begin at 9 a.m. with Pastor Michelle Knight presiding. The service will be available on Livestream on the St. John's Pearl City Facebook Page. Sunday school will be held during church.

Healthy Wolves Backpack has been a weekly ministry of St. John's since April

of last year. Backpacks are filled with food and taken to the Pearl City school every Friday. The backpacks are sent home with families for the weekend so that adequate nutrition can be provided for children over the weekend. The families then return the backpack, and they are refilled to be sent home for the next weekend. We currently are serving 41 children through this program. Backpacks are assembled Thursdays at 3:30 p.m. in the upstairs youth kitchen. Anyone in the community is invited

to help. Visit the St. John's Lutheran Church website for more information on how to volunteer.

On March 8 a mid-week soup supper will be served from 6 to 6:30 p.m. A short service will begin at 6:30 p.m. The weekly services will be held in Luther Hall. All community members are welcome.

St. John's Lutheran Church of Pearl City is located at 229 S. First St., in Pearl City. If you need to contact the pastor or church, you may call 815-443-2215 for information.

News briefs

Lena American Legion Auxiliary

The March meeting of the American Legion Auxiliary will meet on Wednesday, March 8, at the Lena American Legion Home at 6 p.m. Participants will make tray favors for the hospitalized veterans. New members are always welcome. Judy Oellerich oversees the social hour. Junior members will

meet on March 11 at 10 a.m. at the American Legion Home to work on a service project and.

Fraud and Scams workshop to be offered

The Friend of the Lanark Public Library, who has partnered with Lanark Public Library, will present a program

on Fraud and Scams. The date is Thursday, March 16, 2023, at 6:30 pm in the Council Chambers at 111 S. Broad St., Lanark, IL. The staff at the Exchange State Bank, Lanark, Illinois, will be the featured speaker. No registration is required and no charge for the program. In case of inclement weather call 815-493-2166 or visit the library Face Book page.

Obituaries

EUGENE KNOLL

Eugene "Skinny" M. Knoll, age 94, of McConnell, passed away peacefully with his family by his side on Sunday Feb. 12, 2023, at the Lena Living Center. He was born April 3, 1928, in Sparta, WI and was one of 13 children, him being the third youngest. At the age of 17 he served in the U.S. Navy from 1945-1949. He was married to Grace Paulson, she passed away in 2009. Eugene married Bernice Martin in 1965 and she passed away in 2011.

He worked at Burgess Battery for many years until they closed and then went to work at Kelly Springfield Tire Company until his retirement. He was a member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Lena since 1949. He was a member of the Legion for over 50 years and a member of the



McConnell Fire Department. In his later years he loved the outdoors, hunting, trapping, fishing. He enjoyed

putting together puzzles and going on vacation with Bobby and Tina. One of his most memorable trips was going to visit his Tennessee hillbilly family. Most of all he enjoyed being with his family. Gene was always a leader; he did not seek attention but always lent a helping hand to his neighbors and friends. There wasn't anything he could not do. If he put his mind to it, he would accomplish it!

He is survived by his children; Nancy (Charlie) Hilgenbrinck, Norman (Leigh Ann)

Knoll, Randy (Gloria) Knoll, Bob (Tina) Martin, Glenda Heath, and Mark (Tammy) Knoll. 13 grandchildren, 27 great-grandchildren, and 3 great-great-grandchildren. Sister; Violet Good and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, 2 wives; Grace and Bernice, 2 daughters; Deborah in infancy in 1953 and Pam in 2021. Grandson; Chad Martin in 2017, great grandson; Tylor in 2006, son-in-law "Woody" Heath and 11 siblings.

Funeral services were held on Friday Feb. 17, at 12 p.m. at St. John's Lutheran Church in Lena with a visitation from 10 a.m. Burial took place in Lena Burial Park. Rev. Rick Bader officiated the service. In lieu of flowers a memorial has been established in his memory.

MERVIN HINTZ

Mervin Hintz, age 87 of Stockton, IL passed away Feb. 22, 2023, after a short illness. He was born on Dec. 23, 1935, in Nora, IL; the son of the late Herman and Emma (Tessendorf) Hintz. He graduated from Warren High School with the class of 1953. Mervin married Donna Menzemer on Dec. 30, 1965. Donna passed away in 2011.

Mervin was a farmer for 70 years. He was proud of his red Holsteins. He enjoyed his Allis Chalmers tractors, singing in church and community choirs, quartets,



and singing solo. He also enjoyed keeping up with friends and relatives.

Mervin is survived by his stepchildren, Gary Menzemer of Stockton, Keith (Jo) Menzemer of Warren and Randy Menzemer of Stockton; also many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife, Donna; his step son, Kevin Menzemer; his brothers, Alvin,

Clarence, William, Harold and George; and his sisters, Elisabeth, Rose, Margaret and Gert.

The funeral service will be held on Thursday, March 2, at Christ Lutheran Church in Stockton at 10 a.m. There will be a visitation on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, at Hermann Funeral Home in Stockton from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Interment will take place at Elmwood Cemetery in Warren, IL. A memorial fund has been established. Condolences may be shared at www.hermannfuneralhome.com.



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Slices of life

Falling off the cliff



By JILL PERTLER Columnist

Life changes us. Sometimes in increments, like accidentally stepping off the curb.

Sometimes in ways akin to falling off a cliff. It's these cliff—changing moments that transform us in ways we never could have imagined—before. It's like falling from one world into another—into a life so different that your old life can only be referenced as "before."

This new life. The life you are living "after," whatever that after may be for you: After a birth. After a death. After a divorce. After a marriage. After a major illness. After some life changing event—truly life changing in every aspect of every day and every minute.

An event so sweeping that it encompasses you and every cell of your being. It changes the way you view the world.

And whether excruciatingly joyous or magnificently sad, you understand you will never be the same again. You can't ever go back to the you that was before. That door has irrevocably and permanently shut and the only way forward is, well, forward.

It's almost like the before never happened. It's hard to remember what life was like—back then. Sometimes you want to remember—you long for it—but you just can't go back. In reality or memory. Oh, sure, you can recall certain instances, certain experiences, but to actually remember—on the cellular or the heart level—what it felt like to live that "other" life? No. You can't because you've changed and you're no longer the person who lived that life—before.

You can recall, but you can't remember. Not really. And it wouldn't be right if you did, because every day—every moment—you are changing and evolving and becoming a new you. A you who is living in the now, not the before.

Perhaps not by choice, but by circumstance.

With that said, your life now is not always in the after. You try, but sometimes it hits you. It hits you so hard that you have to catch your breath and consciously will yourself to breathe in and out. One gulp of air at a time.

Your mind bends to the before—because you may want that badly—and it engulfs you just as surely as falling off the cliff engulfed you. Like a rockslide or avalanche.

But then on the second, or third, or 15th or 80th breath you find you are breathing normally again. Your heart is not thumping out of your chest, but seems to be beating along with the air flowing in and out of your lungs.

And in that moment, you realize there really isn't a before or after; there is only a now.

You may long for the before, and I often do.

You may long for a new after, which I also do.

But what you really have is now. Right now. Today.

And you can choose how to perceive this.

It can be constricting—denying you both your past and the future. Keeping the memories at bay. Keeping hope just beyond reach.

Or, it can be liberating. Providing hope and strength to both your past and your future. Giving memories their space, without letting them control you. Allowing the hope and joy and trust to surround your now and allow you to know it will be all right.

Because it is all right. Already.

It is. See that. Embrace that. It's all going to be okay, and that is a very lovely thing. Worth smiling about, even.

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Opinion

Inviting students to help revive our democracy

Editor's note: This op-ed was distributed by Capitol News Illinois on behalf of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute. The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own.

By John T. Shaw
Sen. Paul Simon was keenly aware of the endless challenge and enduring opportunity to revitalize our democracy and strengthen our communities.

He believed that democracy can be sustained and enhanced when citizens respect values such as tolerance and responsibility and take practical steps to make the world better.

In his book, "Fifty-Two Simple Ways to Make a

Difference," Simon outlined dozens of specific things we all can do to become better citizens who build better communities.

Inspired by his vision and commitment, the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute will soon accept applications for the inaugural Paul Simon Democracy Prize.

The Institute will award \$5,000 prizes to three current Illinois college or university students for the design—and implementation—of projects



John T. Shaw

to strengthen democracy in their communities. Proposals could involve hosting public discussions or debates, registering voters, funding school newspapers to cover local issues, creating a speaker series on community matters, developing a program to recruit and train poll watchers, or an entirely new idea.

To enter the competition, students must submit a video proposal by April 1, 2023, to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute. Winners will be announced on April 17. We are looking for proposals that are persuasive, imaginative, optimistic, and can plausibly be implemented within six

months. Videos should be between 3 and 5 minutes and will be assessed on the quality of the proposal, not the video itself. However, creative and well-produced videos will get our attention!

The three winning videos will be posted on the Institute's website and YouTube channel. Prize recipients will be invited to a celebratory reception at the Institute in the fall of 2023 and asked to describe how their proposals are being implemented.

Complete details of the Paul Simon Democracy Prize will soon be available on our website, <https://paulsimoninstitute.siu.edu/>.

The Simon Institute recently hosted a conversation with Rachel Kleinfeld, a democracy expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International

Peace. Dr. Kleinfeld described the many challenges confronting our democracy but warned against despair. She urged America's colleges and universities to encourage students to renew and reimagine our democracy.

This challenge resonated with me and it's in that spirit that the Institute is creating the Paul Simon Democracy Prize. It complements two ongoing Institute programs focused on "Better politics and Smarter government" in our state: the Renewing Illinois Summit for Illinois college and university students and the Paul Simon-Jim Edgar Award to acknowledge and celebrate statesmanship in state and local government in Illinois.

When Senator Simon announced his candidacy for president in May of 1987,

he offered both inspiration and a challenge. "You and I are on this planet but a short time," he said. "Let us seize this time and opportunity to build a better tomorrow so that generations to come will look back upon us and say, 'These were people of uncommon compassion and vision and courage.'"

The Democracy Prize, along with the Renewing Illinois student summit and the Simon-Edgar statesmanship award, embody Paul Simon's highest values and aspirations.

John T. Shaw is the director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Shaw's monthly column explores how Illinois can work toward better politics and smarter government.

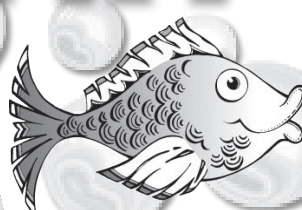
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Opinion

Weekly connection

A warm barn on a cold night

Is there anything as comfy, cozy and wonderful to a dairy farmer as the sounds and smells of a contented herd of cows lying in a bed of straw in a nice warm barn on a frigid winter night? We had a couple of cold nights last week and it reminded me of this. When we were growing up on the farm in Wisconsin there were some pretty frigid nights. On those winter nights when we knew it was going to be down in the single digits or colder, we would throw down a few extra bales of straw from the haymow and stack them up inside the barn against the outside doors to keep the cold out. In the morning those straw bales stacked around the doors would have a nice layer of frost on them, but the worst of the cold air had stayed outside. With ninety-six cows all throwing off a great deal of body heat, the barn stayed nice and warm even though the wind blew, and the temps dropped lower and lower throughout the night. In the



By **SCOTT CERNEK**
Columnist

morning when we stepped inside the barn, we were greeted with the sounds of contented animals chewing their cud with steam exiting their nostrils as they breathed in rhythm with each other. Sometimes nearly every cow would be lying down in their stanchions which was quite an impressive sight as well. Cows are really very social animals who love to be with other cows and people too. A good dairy farmer becomes almost one with the herd, caring for them and looking after their needs with a real sense of protection and concern. It's funny how the herd knows exactly when a stranger comes around. They get a little restless and uneasy until they get to know the person and feel safe. Dairy

farmers are conscientious about their animals partly because it is their livelihood, but also because there is an innate sense of protection that he has for his animals. I was watching the cable program called, The Amazing Dr. Pol, the other day. He has a veterinarian practice and animal health clinic over in Michigan and they have been making a television program about his practice for several years. I love watching the

show and seeing how much affection these animal owners have for their sick pets and farm animals. Dr. Pol always seems to know just what to do to get those animals up and healthy again. I'm sure they edit out the times when the animals don't make it as that wouldn't make for very good television. It is pretty amazing how much love and responsibility people show for their animals. Our youngest daughter has always

been especially fond of every living creature she ever saw. One of our favorite father-daughter times was when I would take her to a pet store, which was often, and we would just walk around and see all the different kinds of pets there were. We did this for years, all the way up until she was grown up. We usually came home with a new gerbil, bunny, fish or something. I had a hard time saying no to my baby girl.

In Proverbs 27:23 we read; know well the condition of your flocks and give attention to your herds. God gave man dominion over the animals to treat them well and help the animal become useful to man. Whether they are a pet bringing joy and companionship or livestock providing food and clothing for our needs, our job is to care for them and give them a good life as best we can. Until next week, God bless.

Stephenson County Fair announces 2023 dates

The Stephenson County Fair Association is excited to bring the fair to Freeport on July 25 through 29, 2023. The Grandstand events will be Midwest Summer National-Tractor Pulls on Tuesday and Wednesday. Youth and Family Night with Scrambles and Tough Trucks is on Thursday. Friday night is Bulls and Barrels and the Demolition Derby

is on Saturday. Visit the fair website and Facebook for announcements and more details. Vendor applications, community entertainment and involvement from all of the Stephenson County Organizations are currently being accepted. For more information, go to stephensoncountyfair.org or call the office at 815-235-2918.

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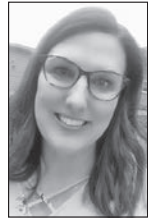
Spreading community appreciation

Gracie Kruse and Jaycie Ernst had the idea to bake some cupcakes for the hard-working linemen who were working to get all the power restored for the community. Great job, Gracie and Jaycie!

Around the Northern Hills

Rules of the Road trucking seminars

Mark your calendars! The Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau will be hosting one of IFB's "Rules of the Road Trucking Seminars." This seminar will cover recent changes, as well as some of the more established but still misunderstood rules. Topics will include the USDOT number, UCR registration, Entry Level Driver Training, and driver's license classifications, to name a few. The meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 15 at 10 a.m. at the Elizabeth Community Building. This meeting, and all the meetings across the state, are free to farm bureau members, but advanced registration is required. To sign up, call our office at 815.858.2235 or email jdcfbmgr@gmail.com and we will add you to the list.



By **ANNETTE EGGERS**
Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau

Lasagna

Orders are due to our office by March 13. Pick-up is set for April 5 from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. To place your order, stop in our office or to our website at www.jodaviesscfb.com and click on the order form on the home page.

Gently used farm toys requested

We need to replenish our farm toys used at Farm Fun Days this summer and thought who better to ask than our members. If you have gently used farm toys that are no longer being used, we would love to put them to good use. We would rather bring new life to old toys than buy new. If you can help us out, please drop them off at our office. Thank you in advance.

Ag in the Classroom fundraiser

Want home cooked meals, but short on time? I've got the perfect solution for you! Take part in the Ag in the Classroom Freezer Meal Fundraiser. You will get 10 meals frozen for you and ready to reheat. Each meal feeds three to five people. The cost is \$180 for the set.

- The 10 meals include:
- Pulled Pork
 - BBQ Pulled Chicken
 - Hickory Smoked Pork Loin
 - Teriyaki Chicken
 - Smoked Pork Chop Sandwiches
 - Chicken Bacon Ranch Pasta
 - Pulled Pork Mac & Cheese
 - Cowboy Casserole
 - Chicken & Biscuits

Scholarships available

Applications are now available for nurse practitioner scholarships through the Illinois Farm Bureau Rural Nurse Practitioner Scholarship program. There will be 15 scholarships worth \$4,000 each. The scholarship program helps encourage and develop a pool of rural health practitioners to help meet the health care needs in rural Illinois. Students who receive the scholarship agree to practice for two years in an approved rural area in Illinois. To be eligible, students must be Illinois residents and be a registered nurse accepted in an accredited Nurse Practitioner Program. Applications are available at www.rimsap.com and are due May 1.

Farm Fun Fact

John Deere invented the first self-scouring plow in 1837.

SOS+ begins its 19th year

On Thursday, March 9, Senior Outreach of Stockton and surrounding areas (SOS+) will gather at Calvary UM Fellowship Hall for the beginning of its 19th year of bringing entertaining and educational programs to our seniors. The year will be filled with musical talents and educational programs from local areas and areas nearby.

The year kicks off with an educational program by Jim Vaupel, a veteran from Stockton, as he shares his knowledge of the history behind the making of the *Star-Spangled Banner*. Jim will also share what the American Legion is all about and his own personal experiences serving our country in time of war.

The program will be held at Stockton's Calvary UM

Fellowship Hall, 315 W. Maple at 2 p.m. Refreshments will be served by the seniors following the meeting. All seniors are welcome. There is no cost to join, but a free will offering is taken at each meeting which helps provide interesting and educational programs throughout the year.

The SOS+ is always looking for volunteers to help

reach out to local seniors. If interested in joining the planning committee team, sharing a talent or offering suggestions for upcoming programs, please call Mary Feltmeyer at 815-297-5425, Nancy Rice at 815-275-0303 or Shirley Toepfer at 815-947-3639. Seniors in need of a ride to the programs can also contact the numbers listed above.

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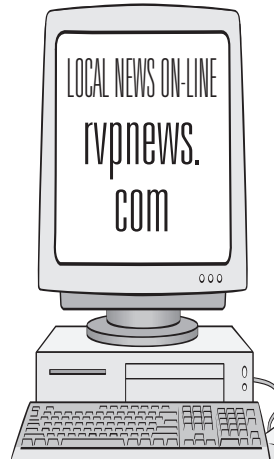
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Illinois Farm Bureau to host 'Rules for the Road' seminar

Illinois Farm Bureau will host a series of two-hour programs focusing on transportation laws and regulations as they pertain to the agricultural industry. Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau will host one of the sessions on March 15 at 10 a.m. at the Elizabeth Community Building.

The *Rules for the Road* seminar will cover recent changes, as well as some of the more established but still misunderstood rules. Topics will include the USDOT Number, UCR registration, Entry Level Driver Training, and driver's license classifications, to name a few. In addition, one of the events will also be broadcast virtually on March 1 at 6 p.m.

"These presentations take a closer look at the rules and provide an opportunity for farmers to ask agriculture-related trucking questions that they can't seem to find clear answers for," said Rodney Knittel, IFB Assistant Director of Transportation and Infrastructure. Knittel specializes in farm transportation issues and will lead the seminar series and will be joined by Illinois enforcement agencies.

Rules for the Road seminars are open to all Illinois Farm Bureau members. Attendance is free, courtesy of Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau and Illinois Farm Bureau, but advance registration is required. Please call the Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau to reserve a place at the seminar by March 10. For more information, contact the Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau.

Illinois dairy farmers focus on margins, dietary guidelines

By Daniel Grant
FARMWEEK

Maintaining profitability in the dairy industry is one of the top priorities for the Illinois Milk Producers Association (IMPA) every year, and particularly for 2023. That's due to a concerning combination of potentially lower milk prices paired with higher input costs ahead, according to Tasha Bunting, Illinois Farm Bureau associate director of commodities and livestock programs who also serves as IMPA manager.

She outlined IMPA's priorities for this year on Feb. 1 at the Illinois Dairy Summit in St. Rose. "Milk prices throughout 2022 remained pretty strong but, from what we're hearing, they probably won't stay quite as strong in 2023," Bunting said. "With rising input costs, feed costs and everything else associ-

ated with dairy production, we need to help farmers find ways to keep them profitable and in business."

USDA's world ag supply and demand estimates released last month project the all-milk price could decline from an average of \$25.55 per hundredweight in 2022 to \$21.60 this year. The average price estimates in 2023 for Class III (\$18.85) and Class IV milk (\$19.25) are also down from last year. "The Dairy Summit gives farmers ways (they can connect with industry experts and fellow farmers) so they can make changes that will directly impact the profitability on their farm," Bunting said.

"We brought back a farmer panel (at the Feb. 1 event) to talk about how to implement cover crops either on the grain operation side or including the feeding oper-

ation for dairy cows." But, even after a good year in 2022, the number of dairy farms in the state continues to decline while the average age of dairy farmers in Illinois continues to creep higher, Bunting noted. "We are still continuing to lose a number of dairy farms in Illinois," the IMPA manager said. "The cow numbers remain relatively stable."

USDA's Jan. 30 cattle inventory report pegged the number of milk cows in Illinois at 79,000 as of Jan. 1, down 2percent from last year.

Two other IMPA priorities this year revolve around policy. There could be a lot of different things impacting dairy producers from farm bill discussions to a dietary guidelines committee about to start meeting," Bunting said. "It can really impact the way dairy is represented

in a lot of our schools and institutional food programs."

USDA dietary guidelines currently encourage most Americans to consume three servings of dairy per day. Dairy contains key nutrients including vitamin D, calcium and potassium. "It seems there's interest (from the new committee) in maintaining the dietary guidelines. It looks so far to be moving in a positive direction (for dairy)," Bunting said. "We want to make sure dairy stays on the table."

Looking ahead, IMPA leaders and members will participate this spring in the Illinois Ag Legislative Day, during which they will share dairy facts and information with legislators. IMPA will also host its annual Dairy Tech Tour this summer, although the date and location are undetermined at this point.

'Equitable restrooms' bill advances in House

Bill calls for setting standards for multi-occupant, all-gender facilities

By Peter Hancock
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

A bill that would allow restaurants, hotels, and other public places to designate "all-gender multiple-occupancy" restrooms passed out of a House committee Feb. 22, sending it to the full House for consideration. House Bill 1286, sponsored by Rep. Katie Stuart, D-Edwardsville, is similar to one that passed through the House in 2021 but died in the Senate.

"So it just creates the opportunity for places, businesses, universities, you name it, to create a multi-stall gender-neutral restroom, if they so choose," Stuart said during the hearing. "And it lays out requirements for what is in that facility."

In 2019, the General Assembly passed the Equitable Restrooms Act, which identified all single-occupancy restrooms in public places as gender-neutral and designated them for use by no more than one person at a time, or for family or assisted use. But there is currently no law in Illinois authorizing multi-occupancy restrooms to be gender-neutral. The text

of the bill states its purpose is "to promote the privacy, safety, and gender inclusivity of all Illinois residents and visitors," and that the measure should be "liberally construed" to carry out its purpose.

It would require that such restrooms be clearly marked at their entrance with "inclusive signage" that does not indicate any specific gender. It would also require that each toilet stall be separated by dividers and a functioning lock mechanism on the door.

Urinals, if present, also would have to be separated by partitions.

The bill also provides that any multi-occupancy restroom could be converted to an all-gender restroom. But if another multi-occupancy restroom that is designated for a specific gender is located adjacent to or near the all-gender restroom, both would have to be designated as all-gender facilities. Ad-

ditionally, the bill would set out more specific standards for multi-occupant all-gender facilities that are part of a newly constructed building or one resulting from major renovations of a building.

The bill would require the Illinois Department of Public Health to adopt administrative rules to implement the new standards. Rep. Charlie Meier, R-Okawville, said the bill's requirements could impose significant costs on the owners of large arenas where plumbing fixtures are already in place.

But Stuart said those facilities would be under no obligation to convert their existing restrooms to all-gender facilities. She said the bill would only allow them to do so if they choose. The bill passed out of the House Human Services Committee on a party-line vote of 6-3. It now goes back to the full House where it could come up at any time for final vote.

Winter reading with JDCF continues

The Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation (JDCF) extends an invitation to join their book club, *Conservation Conversation*, for a free series of weekly Zoom discussions. Starting March 1, the group begin with the second book in a three-book series, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the U.S.*, facilitated by Andrew Townsend. Attendees may join in for any or all of the four weekly discussions.

This book club continues to look into the relationship of the Indigenous People of the Americas with their natural environment, and the changes that came with European contact and settlement. Each session will focus on pre-determined chapters so that readers are able to read along during the month and come prepared with questions and comments. There is

no fee to participate, but books are not provided. Audio versions of each book are available. A limited number of books will be furnished for those unable to purchase. Please contact JDCF for details.

The second book in the series is *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. This book takes a deep look into the relationships between the early settlers - then United States citizens and their governments, and the Indigenous peoples and their Nation's governments. Sessions for this book will begin at 6:30 p.m. each Wednesday evening in March and will be approximately one hour in length. Discussion of the introduction and chapters on through three will take place in the first session on March 1.



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McCombie to provide free museum pass to constituents

State Representative Tony McCombie announced that her office will make a free 'Constituent Education Resource Card' available to residents wishing to visit select museums and zoos in the Chicagoland area. Rep. McCombie's office has a museum pass to use for free admission for select Chicagoland locations. Any resident of the 89th District can reserve the Constituent Education Resource Card on a first come first serve basis to visit any of the following museums in 2023:

- Adler Planetarium
- The Art Institute of Chicago
- Brookfield Zoo
- Chicago Botanic Garden
- Chicago Children's Museum
- Chicago History Museum
- Dusable Museum of African American History

- The Field Museum
- Lincoln Park Zoo
- Museum of Contemporary Art
- Museum of Science and Industry
- National Museum of Mexican Art
- National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture
- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum
- John G. Shedd Aquarium

The pass is provided to Rep. McCombie's office by the Museums in the Park Organization. Only one group of up to four can reserve the pass at a time. The pass must be picked up and brought back to the district office. Constituents need to call for an appointment to come to the district office to pick up the pass before visiting the museums.

It is strongly recommend-

ed that families utilizing the card contact the museum they plan to visit to learn if pre-registration is required to visit. Please contact Rep. McCombie's office at 815-291-8989 or at mccombie@ilhouse.gov and provide a name and address along with the requested dates (can be used for up to three days in row) to reserve the Constituent Education Resource Card for your use.

Gill's Freeport Disposal now sole subcontractor for waste hauling

After a contract buy-out, Gill's Freeport Disposal is now the sole subcontractor of residential waste hauling within Freeport. In early 2023, Moring Disposal Inc. decided to sell certain assets, including its contracted portion of the City of Freeport Waste Hauling Contract to Allied Waste Transportation Inc. (also known as Republic Services). Within the City of Freeport contract, there is a provision for Gill's Disposal to buy-out or match any Gills Moring enters into. On Feb. 17, 2023, Gills Disposal exercised that right and bought out Moring Disposal's portion of

the City of Freeport Waste Hauling Contract. Current refuse rates in the contract will stay the same. Former Moring customers may temporarily experience time-of-day delays as Gill's drivers learn new routes, but schedules will remain the same.

In addition to residential waste hauling, Gill's Freeport Disposal also purchased the rights to operate the Freeport Transfer Station. For more information about Gill's Freeport Disposal, please visit <https://www.gillsfreeportdisposal.com/> or call 815-233-5644.

February Northwest Illinois Daily Drawing winners

The Northwest Illinois Daily (a cooperative fundraiser) announces its February winners. The Daily Drawing is a drawing for 365 daily cash prizes from Oct. 1, 2022, to Sept. 30, 2023, to those donating for a ticket. Over \$21,000 is paid out to ticket holders during the drawing year. Cash prizes vary between \$50 and \$250. A ticket may win

multiple times as each ticket remains in the drawing each day for the entire year, no matter how often it may be drawn.

- \$50 – Sue Milligan, Bloomington
- \$150 – Michaela Kuzniar
- \$50 – Joe Blair
- \$50 – Lorie Wright
- \$50 – Connie Travis
- \$50 – Colin Sweeney

- \$50 – Tabria Thomas
- \$50 – Brittney Demeter
- \$50 – Jeri Strohecker
- \$50 – Joey Delaney
- \$50 – Donna D'Amico
- \$50 – Mackenzie Knautz
- \$50 – James Ertmer
- \$150 – Lisa Walters
- \$50 – Amy Cornwell
- \$50 – Allen Hendrix
- \$50 – Layne Bidlingmaier

- \$50 – Kimberly Folks
- \$50 – Terry Carroll
- \$150 – Emma Kempel
- \$50 – Tami Alcorn
- \$50 – Sue Grommes
- \$50 – Patti Roberts
- \$50 – Ashley Carroll
- \$50 – Nikki Keltner
- \$50 – Sheri Grindey
- \$50 – Rick Gile
- \$50 – Jane Busch

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You can still make a contribution to an IRA for the 2022 tax year until April 18, 2023. We'll help you decide what kind of IRA makes the most sense for you.

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FROM LENA'S KITCHEN



The not so skinny cook

Last week I wrote that ugly winter popped up and as I write this column even uglier weather has popped up. The ice is horrible. It has wrecked trees and landscaping; power was off for hours in some places, and everyone was stuck in a rut! I hope that this last splurge of winter is really our last. I wasn't sure I would even get this column out. If you are reading it, the internet is finally up and running.

Cranberry and Bacon Swiss Cheese Dip

You can make this cheesy appetizer ahead and bake it right before serving. It is a recipe from a friend in Minnesota.

- 2/3 C. mayonnaise
- 1/3 C. chive and onion cream cheese
- 1 T stone-ground mustard
- 1/4 t. garlic pepper blend
- 3 C. shredded Swiss cheese
- 1 pkg. (10 oz.) frozen chopped onions, thawed and patted dry

- 8 pieces bacon, cooked and chopped into small pieces
- 1/2 C almonds, sliced
- 1/3 C dried cranberries, chopped
- Baguettes toasted, melba rounds

Preheat the oven to 325. In a large bowl, combine the mayo, cream cheese, mustard, and garlic pepper. Add the Swiss cheese and mix well. Stir in onions, bacon, 4 C. almonds and cranberries. Spread into a greased 2 qt. baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining almonds. Place on a baking sheet. Bake, uncovered, until bubbly, 35 to 30 minutes. Serve warm.

Honey Glazed Carrots

These carrots are a delicious side for any meal. You can save the recipe for Easter because they would go well with a ham dinner.

- 1 lb. carrots, trimmed and peeled
- 1/4 C. dry sherry or chicken stock
- 1/4 C. honey
- 2T unsalted butter
- 2T firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 T. fresh rosemary, chopped
- 1 T. sherry vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 2 t. salt
- 2 t. pepper

In a large skillet, cook carrots, sherry, honey, butter, brown sugar, chopped rosemary, vinegar, salt, and pepper covered over medium heat, stirring occasionally until carrots are almost tender, about 20 minutes. Uncover and cook until carrots are tender, and liquid is syrupy, about 10 minutes.

Stuffed Pasta Shells

If you are looking for an easy meatless meal, these delicious pasta shells are creamy and filling. There are not many ingredients, so that means not a lot of dishes.

- 4 C. shredded mozzarella cheese
 - 1 carton (15 oz.) ricotta cheese
 - 1 pkg. (10 oz.) frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
 - 1 pkg. (12 oz.) jumbo pasta shells, cooked and drained
 - 3 1/2 cups spaghetti sauce
 - Grated Parmesan cheese
- Preheat the oven to 350. Combine cheese and spinach, stuff into shells. Arrange in a greased 9 x 13 baking dish. Pour spaghetti sauce over the shells. Cover and bake until heated through, about 30 minutes. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese before serving.

Buttermilk Mushroom Pork Chops

This recipe is one that I tried on one of the snowy days. I had pork chops in the freezer and some buttermilk, so I put it all together. It was a great meal. I shared it with a friend, and she liked it too. A different way to cook pork chops is this pretty easy to make main meal.

- 1/4 C. flour
- 1 t. salt, divided
- 2 t. pepper
- 1/2 t. paprika
- 6 pork loin chops, boneless
- 2 T oil
- 1 T butter
- 1 lb. fresh mushrooms, quartered

- 1/2 C. chicken broth
- 1 T minced fresh basil
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 C. buttermilk
- Cooked egg noodles

In a shallow bowl, mix the flour, salt, pepper, and paprika. Add pork chops, one at a time and toss to coat. Shake off excess. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat; brown pork chops in batches. Transfer meat and drippings to a 4 qt. slow cooker. In the same skillet, heat butter over medium heat. Add mushrooms. Cook and stir until tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Add broth, stirring to loosen browned bits from pan. Pour mushroom mixture over the chops; sprinkle with basil.

Cook, covered, on low until meat is tender, 3 to 4 hours. Whisk together in a bowl, soup, buttermilk, and remaining salt; pour over pork chops. Cook, covered, 30 minutes longer. Stir before serving. Serve over noodles; sprinkle with parsley before serving.

Garlic Bread Tuna Melts

If you need a Friday supper (or lunch), these tuna melts will be a good thing to serve. However, if you don't want to make tuna melts but really like them, Andrea Magee at Coach's Bar and Grill makes really good ones.

- 1/4 cup butter, cubed
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 French rolls or hoagie buns, split
- 2 can (one 12 oz. one 5 oz.) albacore white tuna in water, drained and flaked
- 1/4 C. mayonnaise
- 1 1/4 t. dill weed, divided
- 8 slices cheddar cheese
- 8 slices tomato

Preheat the broiler. In the microwave, melt butter with garlic. Place rolls on a baking sheet, cut side up, brush with butter mixture. Broil 2 to 3 minutes under broiler (about 3 inches from broiler). In a

small bowl, mix tuna, mayo and 1 t. dill. Layer roll bottoms with tuna mixture and cheese. Broil until cheese is melted, about 2 minutes. Top with tomato and sprinkle with remaining dill. Replace tops and serve immediately.

Coffee and Cream Blondies

These bars have the unique taste of coffee and toffee. The espresso powder provides the coffee and the brown sugar makes a toffee like cookie. The cream cheese swirl makes a delicious compliment to this great bar.

- 1 T. warm water
- 2 t. instant espresso powder
- 2 C. flour
- 2 1/2 t. baking powder
- 1 t. salt
- 1 C. unsalted butter, melted
- 1 C. firmly packed light

- brown sugar
 - 1/2 C. sugar
 - 1 1/4 t. vanilla, divided
 - 2 eggs, room temperature
 - 1 C. pecans, toasted and chopped
 - 2 oz. cream cheese, softened
 - 2 T. heavy whipping cream, room temperature
 - 1/4 C. powdered sugar
- Preheat the oven to 350. Spray a 9-inch square baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan. In a small bowl, stir together 1 T. warm water and espresso powder until dissolved. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. In a large bowl, whisk together espresso mixture, melted butter, brown sugar, sugar and 1 t. vanilla until smooth. Whisk in eggs, one at a time, until well com-

binced. Stir flour mixture into butter mixture just until dry ingredients are moistened. Stir in nuts. Spread batter into prepared pan.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the cream cheese, cream, remaining vanilla until smooth. Whisk in powdered sugar until smooth. Drop mixture by teaspoonfuls onto batter; gently swirl together with the tip of a knife. Bake until golden brown and a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes, loosely covering with foil after 15 minutes to prevent excess browning. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan and cut into 3-inch squares. Store in an airtight container.

See KITCHEN, Page 14

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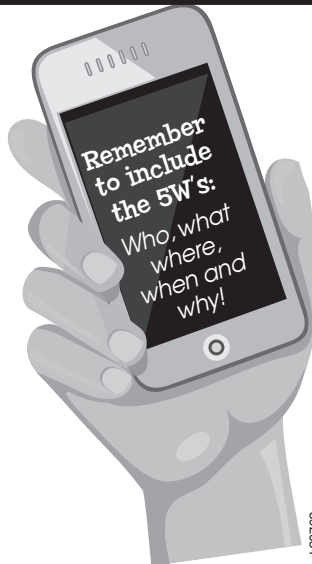
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Getting Started with Meat Goat Production program offered

Join University of Illinois Extension for the next topic in the "Livestock Production and Principles for Beginners Webinar Series." Sarah Farley, Local Foods and Small Farms Extension Educator will discuss "Getting Started with Meat Goat Production" on Thursday, March 16 at 6 p.m. This program is being offered as a Zoom webinar and is at no cost to participants. Pre-registration is required by Wednesday, March 15, 2023, to receive the Zoom link. To register or for more information on the program please visit us online at go.illinois.edu/meatgoats or call our office at 815-235-4125.

In this session, attendees will explore basic considerations for starting a meat goat enterprise. Topics include industry overview, meat goat selection, nutrition, herd health, housing and fencing, general management, and markets in Northern Illinois. As an introductory session, participants should leave with a general understanding of meat goat production and resources to get started.

The last topic in the series is Farm Scale Manure Management with Jay Solomon on Thursday, April 13. This will begin at 6 p.m. and will be offered as a Zoom webinar.

If in need a reasonable accommodation to attend this program, please call the office at 815-235-4125. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet individual needs.

New Girl Scout cookie option debuting this year

The new Girl Scout Cookie Raspberry Rally was available for shipping through local Girl Scouts' Digital Cookie websites until early this week. The thin, crispy cookie is a "sister" cookie to the beloved Thin Mints, infused with raspberry flavor instead of mint and dipped in the same delicious chocolate coating. Supplies are limited, so interested customers are encouraged to purchase at their earliest opportunity.

From Feb. 24 to March 19, Girl Scout Cookie customers can support the world's strongest and youngest entrepreneurs as they host cookie booths in creative ways. Girl Scouts, families, and troops can choose from a variety of cookie booth options to connect with customers! Girl Scouts and troops can market virtual cookie booths where customers

order cookies directly through a Girl Scout's or troop's cookie business website and have cookies shipped to their homes. If Girl Scouts want to remain local and still connect in-person with customers, families may host Cookie Stands at the end of their driveway or in their neighborhood.

Girl Scouts will also participate in traditional, in-person cookie booth sales held at community locations outside local businesses and stores. Beginning late last week, interested customers can visit www.girlscoutsni.org/findcookies to find local cookie booths.

Don't know a Girl Scout? Customers may visit www.girlscoutsni.org/buycookies to purchase cookies directly or be connected local Girl Scout entrepreneurs looking for cookie customers.

Spring Centerpieces workshop offered

Join Nikki Keltner, University of Illinois Extension Program Coordinator, for "Spring Centerpieces" on Wednesday, April 5, 2023, at 6 p.m. at the Jo Daviess County Extension Office, 204 Vine St. Elizabeth, IL 61028. There will be a \$25 fee to attend this program and pre-registration is required as seating is limited. To register or for more information please call the Jo Daviess County Extension Office at 815-858-2273 or register directly at go.illinois.edu/SpringCenterpieces.

This hands-on workshop will walk you through the basics of cut flower arranging. Participants will use what they learn about flower arranging to

create a spring themed centerpiece that they will take home with them. All of the materials needed will be provided. This program is a part of the Spring Break Gardening Series. Other topics being covered in the series include "Starting Vegetable Seeds Successfully", "Growing Great Grapes", "Rainwater Management with Native Plants", and "Spring Invasive and Nuisance Plants". More information about all of these programs can be received by calling us at 815-858-2273.

If in need of reasonable accommodations to participate in this program, please contact the Extension Office at (815)-858-2273. Early requests are strongly encouraged.

House Dems' cannabis working group will engage industry, equity advocates

Group to consider cannabis oversight commission, other industry reforms

By Nika Schoonover
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

Illinois House Democrats announced the formation of a cannabis working group Thursday that will aim to steer the burgeoning industry's expansion in a business-friendly way while still satisfying the equity goals of the landmark 2019 legalization law.

The group is led by Rep. La Shawn Ford, D-Chicago, who has sponsored numerous cannabis-related bills and is an outspoken advocate for racial equity. The working group's main priority, according to Ford, is to make sure individuals who have invested in the newly-created industry are successful. A part of that is to address the disproportionate impact the war on drugs had on communities of color, particularly when it comes to cannabis-related arrests.

According to the ACLU, Black people in Illinois were 7.5 times more likely than white people to be arrested for cannabis-related offenses prior to the state's decriminalization of the drug in 2016.

The same law that legalized recreational cannabis use in 2019 also made individuals previously charged with minor cannabis offenses eligible to have their records expunged. At the end of 2020, Gov. Pritzker announced 492,129 cannabis-related convictions had been expunged and 9,219 low-level cannabis convictions had been pardoned.

The recreational cannabis law was also designed to give "social equity" applicants — or those whose ownership consists of minorities, people with drug convictions or individuals hailing from disproportionately impacted areas — easier access to new dispensary licenses.

"Our goal was to make sure that those communities that

were hardest hit by the war on drugs actually were able to benefit from this industry by having the ability to open up in those communities and hire people from those communities," Ford said in an interview.

Ford was the sponsor of House Bill 1443 in the previous General Assembly, a measure that created 110 additional "social equity" dispensary licenses beyond the initial 75 created by the original legalization law.

Over 30 cannabis-related bills have already been filed in the current General Assembly, which began in January, addressing areas including licensing, distribution of cannabis tax revenue and the expungement of past offenses. The working group will comb through these measures to more effectively address the industry's most pertinent issues.

Illinois recorded a record-high \$1.5 billion of recreational cannabis sales in Fiscal Year 2022, generating about \$445 million in tax revenue. Under law, 25 percent of the taxes collected from recreational cannabis sales are to go to economically distressed communities or those impacted by the war on drugs. In Fiscal Year 2022, about \$115 million in tax revenue went to the state's General Revenue Fund.

Beyond an equity focus, Ford said the working group will also aim to make state policy more accommodating to the industry from a business perspective.

"We have to make sure that we legislate with the industry because they are the investors," Ford said. "If we could empower the businesses, it's going to mean more revenue, and we're going to realize what we intended for the [cannabis legalization] law to do. And that is increase employ-

ment, develop communities, reduce crime in the state."

Ford is joined on the working group by Assistant Majority Leader Marcus Evans, D-Chicago; Assistant Majority Leader Barbara Hernandez, D-Aurora; Assistant Majority Leader Bob Rita, D-Blue Island; Rep. Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz, D-Glenview; Rep. Sonya Harper, D-Chicago; and Rep. Bob Morgan, D-Deerfield.

They'll work with other lawmakers, state agencies, businesses and associations that work directly with the cannabis industry.

One of the involved organizations is the Cannabis Business Association of Illinois, a statewide trade association for cannabis businesses.

The association's legislative priorities include re-implementing curbside pickup and drive-thru services after pandemic-era measures expired, decoupling Illinois' cannabis tax code from the federal tax code, and extending the right to work in the medical cannabis industry for those who have previous cannabis-related convictions.

"Currently, the recreational statute allows individuals with previous drug convictions to gain access to the cannabis industry," Pamela Althoff, executive director at the Cannabis Business Association of Illinois, said in an interview. "That is prohibited in the compassionate and medical statute. We'd like to see both of them mirrored."

The Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition, a grassroots nonprofit that advocates for cannabis-related reform, has their own priorities for the

legislative session, including expanding support for the craft grow industry, creating a singular cannabis oversight commission to streamline cannabis programs, and creating licenses for clubs and lounges so people other than homeowners are able to legally consume cannabis.

"The goal is moving away from having 13-plus state agencies who are not talking to each other," Peter Contos, deputy director of the coalition, said in an interview. "We need one cannabis body who just does all the work, similar to what the state did with the liquor commission."

Evans and Ford have both introduced bills — House Bills 1436 and 1498 — to create a cannabis oversight commission. Contos said the coalition is currently trying to work with both lawmakers to reach an agreement on the legislation.

Contos added they're excited to be involved with the working group because it shows there's a concerted effort to continue cannabis-related reforms.

"We have a long way to go in Illinois to get back to the goals we set a few years ago when we legalized [cannabis] but this is definitely the first step we need to take," Contos said.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government. It is distributed to more than 400 newspapers statewide, as well as hundreds of radio and TV stations. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

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Illinois earns 7th credit upgrade in less than two years

S&P cites recent early debt retirement, buildup of rainy day fund

By Peter Hancock
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS
S&P Global Ratings announced Feb. 23 that it had raised Illinois' long-term credit rating to A-, up from BBB+, marking the seventh upgrade the state has received from a major rating agency in less than two years.

The rating applies to roughly \$27.7 billion in outstanding general obligation, or GO, bonds.

"The upgrade on the GO debt reflects our view that Illinois' commitment and execution to strengthen its budgetary flexibility and stability, supported by accelerating repayment of its liabilities, rebuilding its budget stabilization fund to decade highs; and a slowing of statutory pension funding growth, will likely continue during the outlook period," S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Geoff Buswick said in a news release.

Bonds are a tool that governments and businesses use to borrow money, typically for long-term capital projects such as building construction or other kinds of infrastructure. GO bonds are backed by the government's general taxing authority but other bonds may be backed by more specific revenue sources, such

as sales or motor fuel taxes. Higher bond ratings generally mean the borrower—in this case the state—pays lower interest rates.

Before the recent string of upgrades, all three major rating agencies—including Moody's Investors Service and Fitch Ratings—had rated Illinois' bonds at one notch above "junk" status, the point at which large institutional investors will no longer purchase them.

During the last two years, however, Illinois has used higher-than-expected revenues to pay off its backlog of past-due bills and retire other short-term debt early. In addition, it has set aside \$1.9 billion for the state's budget stabilization fund—commonly known as the "rainy day" fund—and the state is pro-

jected to deposit another \$138 million into that fund in the upcoming fiscal year, according to Gov. JB Pritzker's latest budget proposal.

"I am thrilled to see our hard work at righting the past fiscal wrongs of our state reflected in today's action by S&P with another credit rating upgrade—the third such upgrade in just two years," Pritzker said in a statement. "Our continued fiscal responsibility and smart budgeting will save Illinois taxpayers millions from adjusted interest rates, and my partners in the General Assembly and I look forward to building on that success."

In its announcement Feb. 23, S&P credited the state's "deep and diverse economic base" as well as the state government's access to readily

available cash, including the rainy day fund and untapped interfund borrowing authority. The agency also said it expects ongoing union contract negotiations to be settled in a timely manner.

Offsetting those factors, S&P said, is the state's high unfunded pension and other postemployment benefit liabilities such as health care. The agency also dinged Illinois on its practice of releasing annual financial audits later than most other states and population declines, which it warned could impact future economic growth.

S&P said it could further upgrade Illinois' rating if the state continues paying down unfunded pension liabilities and building up its rainy day fund while shrinking its structural deficit. S&P said

that deficit was in large part caused by not contributing to its pension funds at actuarially determined levels.

On the other hand, S&P said it could downgrade the state's rating in the future if the structural deficit were to increase due to economic uncertainties or if its pension and other fixed-cost obligations exceed expectations.

Pritzker's recent budget proposal seeks to add an extra \$200 million to the pension fund beyond statutory levels for the current fiscal year.

For now, S&P said the state's near-term credit outlook is "stable."

In addition to upgrading the state's general obligation bond rating, S&P also raised its rating on the state's Build Illinois sales tax bonds to A, up from A-.

•Kitchen (Continued from page 11)

Ten Cup Cookies

I had a recipe for Five Cup Cookies several years ago, and someone asked me if I had the Ten Cup recipe. I found it, and it indeed has ten cups of lots of things. This recipe will make a lot of cookies, about 7 dozen.

- 1 C. butter, softened
- 1 C. creamy peanut butter
- 1 C. sugar
- 1 C. packed brown sugar
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 1 C. flour
- 1 t. baking soda
- 1/2 t. baking powder
- 1 C. semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 C. quick-cooking oats
- 1 C. sweetened shredded coconut
- 1 C. chopped pecans
- 1 C. raisins

Preheat the oven to 350. In a large bowl, cream butter, peanut butter, and sugars until blended. Beat in eggs. In another bowl, whisk flour, baking soda and baking powder; gradually beat into creamed mixture. Stir in chocolate chips, oats, coconut, pecans, and raisins. Drop dough by tablespoonfuls 3 inches apart onto greased baking sheets. Bake until golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Cool on pans 5 minutes. Remove to wire rack to cool completely.

Final Thoughts

I mentioned the wild Wednesday we had in Lena. I didn't have electricity for ten hours. I managed to stay warm by putting on extra clothes and blankets in bed. To add insult to injury, my cell phone didn't work, so I couldn't tell anyone about my plight. God Bless my brother who came to check on me (his side of town had electricity!) when he couldn't reach me. It's a good reminder to check on the elderly in your neighborhood when weather is bad. I lost another big tree branch, so it looks as if my pine will have to go. I hate it when trees have to be cut.

We started the Lenten season this past week, although most services had to be cancelled because of the ice storm. Remember that the Lena Evangelical Free Church will be having concerts on Wednesdays during Lent. This week we featured some meatless dishes and will continue to do so. It is time to start looking for some "green" recipes in honor of St. Patrick's Day. If you have any recipes that you would like to share with us, you can contact us in person, by mail at From Lena's Kitchens, *Shopper's Guide* at 240 W. Main St. or email us at scoopshopper@rvpublishing.com.

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- Award winning, cured meats
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- Unique grocery items

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