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VOL. 89 • NO. 37 YOUR FREE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 6, 2023



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Adventures of Stockton officially opens

The Stockton Chamber, Stockton Heritage Museum, and Village of Stockton have been working in partnership with Galena Country Tourism and All Together to program an interactive walking tour of Stockton. The tour pairs public art, window installations, and signage with stories and fun facts from Stockton's past. Come by and check it out!

Blackhawks bounce back in week two

By Trenten Scheidegger
CORRESPONDENT

The Stockton Blackhawks suffered a heartbreaking defeat in week one. A once in a lifetime fourth quarter catch came between Stockton and a week one victory. For Stockton and their first-year head coach Sean Downey, that just

meant an opportunity to show they can respond to adversity. By Friday, Sept. 1 week one was a thing of the past as the Blackhawks prepared for their 2023 home opener against the Heyworth Hornets. Heyworth came into the matchup with a 1-0 record after capturing a week one victory.

The Blackhawks didn't take long to put points on the board. Karl Hubb broke free on a 50-yard run less than two minutes into the first quarter. Hubb capped the drive off with a two-point conversion, giving his Blackhawks an early 8-0 lead. It didn't take long for Tanner Gile to get involved

either. Midway through the first, Gile punched it into the endzone from four yards out. Much like the first drive, Gile got the chance to finish it off

See **BLACKHAWKS**, Page 20

River Ridge off to 5-2 start

By Trenten Scheidegger
CORRESPONDENT

The River Ridge Wildcats couldn't have asked for a much better start to their 2023 volleyball season. Through their first seven matchups, the Wildcats' only two losses came against a tough Lena-Winslow squad and in the championship game of a tournament up in Wisconsin.

The Wildcats opened the season with a home matchup against the Milledgeville Missiles. The Wildcats didn't get much time to settle into the 2023 season, as the very first matchup had the intensity of a postseason meeting. It took three sets, but River Ridge managed to defend their home court with a 2-1 victory over Milledgeville. There wasn't an easy victory on the day as each game finished with scores of 24-26, 25-21, and 25-21.

It took a comeback effort, but River Ridge began their year 1-0. Addison Albrecht led the way in the comeback with 10 kills and three aces. Both Kaylen Bond and Gwen Miller finished with three kills. Miller also tied for the team lead in blocks with three. Laiken Haas also had three blocks in the season opener.

Things didn't get any easier for River Ridge in the second matchup of 2023. The Wildcats had to play host to the Lena-Winslow Panthers, one of the best teams in the Northwest Upstate Illini Confer-

ence. The Wildcats had no answer for Le-Win's big hitters, as River Ridge fell by scores of 25-15 and 25-20. Despite the loss, River Ridge came out of the matchup knowing they had what it takes to compete with the top teams once again.

After the loss to Le-Win, the Wildcats took a chip on their shoulder up into Wisconsin for a weekend tournament on Saturday, Aug. 26. River Ridge put on a great show as they dominated their way through the early parts of the tournament.

In their first match of the weekend, the Wildcats swept Pecatonica [Wisconsin], by scores of 25-23 and 25-17. Albrecht led the way offensively with nine kills and four aces. Haas was a brick wall at the net, racking up three solo blocks in the victory.

Next up, the Wildcats picked up another 2-0 sweep over the Benton Zephyrs. This time it was Miller who stepped it up on offense, leading the way with six kills and an ace. Albrecht remained consistent, posting another five kills and three aces.

In the third matchup, the Wildcats met up with the Albany Comets with a shot at the championship game on the line. River Ridge turned things up a notch as they dominated their way to a third consecutive sweep. This time, it wasn't much of a test as the

See **RIVER RIDGE**, Page 11

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Highland Trustee Pennie Groezinger elected to a second term on ACCT's Diversity Committee

The Highland Community College Board of Trustees is proud to announce Trustee Pennie Groezinger has been elected to serve on the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee for a second term.

"Serving on the national ACCT committee allows me to learn, grow, and share with others throughout the nation," Groezinger said. "My goal is to live out the value of believing in, building up and encouraging everyone."

Community service is at the core of Groezinger's sense of service. She has been actively involved with

the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA), serving on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, and the Awards Team. In addition, she has served as the College's voting delegate for ACCT's Annual Leadership Congress. "One of our state initiatives was our neurodiversity inclusion initiative," said Groezinger. "I firmly believe in improving today and tomorrow for people with learning challenges like autism, dyslexia and other learning challenges. Everyone should have an opportunity to learn, to grow and to contribute to their American dream - inclusion is very important to me." Groezinger is also serving a

second term as a trustee at Highland Community College. She said being a trustee is important to her: "It starts with each of us. We each have the ability to make a difference. As a trustee for HCC, I represent Jo Daviess, Stephenson, Carroll, and Ogle Counties in a fiscally responsible mindset, emphasizing growing and building the skills that our industries and communities need to thrive. My acts of service toward advancing Highland as a professional learning environment are shown through my choices, decisions and votes of support. I am living out my

See TRUSTEE, Page 8

SOS+ to hold Movie Day Sept. 14

It is movie and popcorn day at Senior Outreach of Stockton + Surrounding Areas (SOS+) on Thursday, Sept. 14, 2023, at 2 p.m. All are invited to come and enjoy the Academy Award winning movie, "Driving Miss Daisy". The event will be held at Calvary Church of Stockton's Fellowship Hall.

Alfred Uhry's moving, Pulitzer-Prize-winning play "Driving Miss Daisy" remains an important commentary on race relations in America, hailed for its heartwarming use of comedy and friendship to reveal the common humanity between an elderly Jewish widow and her African-American chauffeur.

See SOS+, Page 8

Obituaries

BEATRICE WOODRUFF

Beatrice Woodruff, age 98, of Pearl City, IL passed away Monday, Aug. 28, 2023 at Lena Living Center. She was born in Kent, IL on April 15, 1925, to the late Lloyd and LeOra (Mammoser) Kempel. Beatrice married Wales Woodruff on Jan. 16, 1946, at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Kent. Wales passed away in 2004.

Beatrice was a graduate of Pearl City High School. She was a lifelong member of St. John Lutheran Church of Pearl City. She was also a member of the Pecatonica VFW Auxiliary. Beatrice was a farmer's wife. She also worked for the Pearl City School District and enjoyed baking pies for them every week. She had retired from Furst McNess. She enjoyed camping, needle work, and playing dominos and card games. Most of all, she loved spending time with her family.

She is survived by her daughters, Sharon (Robert) Knoup of Pearl City and Janet Fritzel of Durand, her



son, Frederick (Laurie) Woodruff of Freeport, her grandchildren, Kimberly (Doug) Sturtevant, Rebecca (Mike) Shafer, Robert (Chris) Knoup, James (Denise) Fritzel, William (Debbie) Woodruff and Angela (Wendell) McClain; her 14 great grandchildren and 6 great great grandchildren, and nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, her son-in-law Jim Fritzel, and her grandson Jonathan Fritzel.

The family would like to thank St. Croix Hospice for their care. A funeral service was held on Friday, Sept. 1, 2023 at Chapel Hill Memorial Gardens in Freeport. A memorial fund has been established. Condolences may be shared at www.hermannfuneralhome.com.

FRANCIS HENRY

Francis (Frank) Edmund Henry, 81 of Machesney Park, IL, formerly of Lena, IL, passed away on Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2023. Frank was born to Floyd and Verneal (Appell) Henry on March 10, 1942, in Freeport, IL. Frank served his country in the US Navy from 1960-1963.

Frank is survived by his sisters: Marjorie Purcell (Gene), Kathy Lulling and Betty Earle (Bob). He is also survived by his niece, Maureen Purcell and nephews Dennis and Dale Lulling. He is preceded in death by his parents.

Frank retired from U of I Rockford Medical College.

He was a member of the American Legion Post 904 in Loves Park for many years. Frank was a hard worker and enjoyed renovating houses. He enjoyed being outdoors, growing vegetables and donating them to the Rockford Food Bank, model railroading, playing cards and dominoes and an occasional casino trip.

Cremation Rites have been accorded. There will be gravesite services Wednesday, Sept. 6 at 1:30 p.m. at St. Joseph Cemetery, Lena, IL. Memorials can be made to Lena American Legion. Condolences may be sent to the family at www.leamonfh.com.

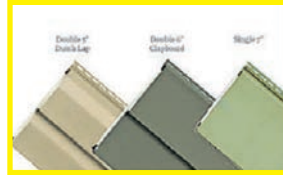
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News briefs

Thrift Shop Bag Sales Sept. 8 and 9

Fill a bag with summer items for only \$2. Summer items include short sleeve and sleeveless tops, shirts and dresses, swim gear, shorts and capris, and sandals.

The Thrift Shop is open Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and is located at 126 South 4th St., Savanna. Proceeds from the Thrift Shop sales are used to fund the emergency needs of individuals and families that have lived in Carroll County for at least six months as well as funding an annual scholarship for each High School in Carroll County.

CONTACT of Northern Illinois Crisis Helpline to close

After 42 years of service to our community, CONTACT of Northern Illinois Crisis Helpline will close its doors effective Sept. 1, 2023. The organization would like to thank everyone for all the support they have received over the years whether it be donations, funding, volunteering, attending fundraisers, or being a client. Please help in spreading the word that those in crisis have access to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by calling 988 or texting MHFA to 741-741.

Lena American Legion Auxiliary

The Lena American Legion Auxiliary will be meeting Wednesday, Sept. 13 at 6 a.m. at the Legion Home. Dues will be collected and can be paid at any time. If dues are mailed in and collected early, we are eligible for cash prizes. Tray favors for the veter-

ans will be made. Julia Moore oversees the social hour.

The Lena American Legion Auxiliary recently was presented the Beulah M Unfer Plaque for the best overall participation in the program for Children and Youth in the Department of Illinois. This award was presented at the Department Convention.

Veteran's Pantry in need of donations

The Veteran's Pantry in Freeport needs donation items which include shaving cream, mouthwash, wash cloths, wash hand towels, bath towels, laundry soap dish soap, paper towels, toilet paper, hand can openers, crest toothpaste, men's and women's deodorant, socks, body wash, and body lotion.

Items may be dropped off on Saturday at the Lena American Legion Home from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The Legion Home is located at 316 W. Main St. Please call 815-369-4684 with any questions. Thank you for the wonderful response to support the veterans.

New book club

The Lanark Public Library and the Friends of the Lanark Public Library will sponsor a new book club for both men and women. An organizational meeting will be Friday, Sept. 8 at 1:30 p.m. in the Lanark Library meeting room at 111-B South Broad Street, Lanark, Illinois. Please call 815-493-2166 during library hours with questions.

Youth gain leadership skills to help their local community fight hunger

Stephenson County 4-H Ambassadors held a Food Drive in Stephenson County to help fight hunger in their own communities. This community service project was created by youth who saw an immediate need right in their own backyards. In a season where food prices are rapidly increasing, the 4-H Ambassadors were looking to help make a difference by giving and sharing with those in need. "From the time we started planning this community service project in the spring all the way to delivering the proceeds to food pantries this summer,

the excitement, and willingness to help others was always at the forefront of the youths' efforts," says Brenda Heimann, Stephenson County 4-H Program Coordinator. "The Ambassadors encouraged their 4-H clubs to get involved in this service project and made it a contest, which brought about a "friendly" competition among their friends."

The 4-H Ambassadors made a flyer and passed it out to their clubs and family members, and some even put them up in businesses to help get the word out. They started collecting items April 1 and ended collecting on

July 29 at the Stephenson County Fair in their 4-H building. Over 1200 items were collected in total and delivered to Freeport Area Church Cooperative, Davis Food Pantry, German Valley Food Pantry, Lena-Winslow Food Pantry, Lena Veteran's Food Pantry, and Pearl City Food Pantry.

"This service project brought a group of 14 youths together for a cause that they see affecting their own communities daily. By getting involved and trying to help ease the problem, the youth gained leadership, communication, problem-solving, and empathy skills," says Heimann.

Timber Lake Playhouse stage presents new musical comedy *Church Basement Ladies*

In rural Minnesota, 1965, the ladies of the local church fortify their flock with love, wisdom and, of course, the food they prepare in the church's basement kitchen. Inspired by the best-selling book "Growing Up Lutheran," *Church Basement Ladies* mixes together delightful original music, endearing characters, and side[dish]-splitting scenes to yield a deliciously funny musical comedy.

The comedy, centered in a rural Minnesota church, features characters seemingly every churchgoer knows: those ladies who faithfully labor in the church kitchen among the casseroles and cast iron. While serving meals for

weddings, funerals and fundraisers, they also solve problems, debate recipes and offer a big dollop of laughter. As one promotion touted, "You'll laugh so hard your side dish will hurt."

Church Basement Ladies, a celebration of the church basement kitchen and the women who work there, features four distinct characters and their relationships as they organize the food and the problems of a rural Minnesota church. From the elderly matriarch of the kitchen to the young bride-to-be learning the proper order of things, the book and music give us a touching, funny look at their lives as we see them handle a record-breaking Christmas dinner, the funer-

al of a dear friend, a Hawaiian Easter Fundraiser, and a steaming hot July wedding. They stave off potential disasters, share and debate recipes, instruct the young, and keep the Pastor on course while thoroughly enjoying (and tolerating) each other.

Information and tickets for all Timber Lake Playhouse events are available online at www.timberlakeplayhouse.org or by calling the Box Office at 815-244-2035. The Box Office is open from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. and show days until intermission.

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OPINION



Slices of life

I guess that's a win



By **JILL PERTLER**
Columnist

Each of us will experience deep grief at one time or another. No one wants it, but we also don't want the alternative—for those we love to grieve after us.

Talk about a conundrum. I know this isn't a pleasant subject. But it is a real one, and one that none of us can avoid. At least not forever.

I got to the front of the queue in 2020—November to be exact—and have learned a few things since then about deep grief.

When most of us think about a queue we associate the thought with long lines and roller coasters.

Grief is most certainly a roller coaster. The most terrifying of them. The roughest ride in the park; I'll attest to that.

Here I am, more than 2½ years out and it is still terrifying, but maybe not as much. The ride has become a bit smoother, a bit more habitable. The sudden, gravity-defying descents aren't quite as deep anymore. Grief isn't what it used to be.

I guess that's a win. Thank goodness.

It used to be so intensely raw. Like walking barefoot on broken glass raw. Like swallowing acid raw. Like being bit by a thousand fire ants raw. Like staring at the sun and burning your eyes raw.

Grief doesn't end. I don't think it does. But it changes. It becomes less raw. Less minute by minute and more hour by hour. Maybe even day by day, but I haven't gotten there quite yet.

When my husband first left this world, I felt the pain in every action, every breath, every minute, every day. That has changed.

I no longer have a panic attack when seeing the men's sock aisle at the local superstore. I remember pulling my cart into an obscure space and trying to catch my breath and avoid a panic attack - because I couldn't breathe at the

thought of never having to shop in the men's sock aisle ever again.

Now I can walk through the men's clothing section - socks, underwear, T-shirts, the whole lot—while continuing to breathe normally.

I guess that's a win.

I no longer die inside when I brown the hamburger. My husband always browned the hamburger. He was much better at it than I. In those first days of grief, browning the hamburger was painful. It burned deeper than I ever could have imagined.

Now I brown the hamburger and make the coffee (another of his responsibilities) without tears or turmoil.

I guess that's a win.

I took my family on vacation—to Mickey's favorite place. It was also my husband's favorite place. He was literally like a kid at a candy store, except his candy store was amusement parks. We'd have to get up too early to get to the entrance before the park opened so we could run to the best ride and get on first without much of a wait.

I couldn't imagine the place without him. But I did it. I took the kids and we ran to the best rides and posed in front of the castle, just like he would have wanted us to do.

I guess that's a win.

I sold a house. I bought a house. I sold a car. I bought a car. I learned to install flooring and paint cabinets and do a backsplash in the kitchen. All wins.

Today's win involves removing and replacing a toilet. I'm learning and stretching and doing new things. I'm not afraid of them anymore.

And I know fully and absolutely he is proud.

I guess that's a win. No, I know it is.

Jill Pertler is an award-winning syndicated columnist, published playwright and author. Don't miss a slice; follow the Slices of Life page on Facebook.

Weekly connection

A new suit for the wedding

The first suit I ever bought was in my freshman year of high school back in the fall of 1976. It was a baby blue leisure. I had been voted to be the freshman rep for the homecoming court at my high school, so my mom took me to town and got me a suit. It had long lapels and my long navy-blue shirt collar hung over the lapels on each side. Those leisure suits were in style for about two years and then disappeared off the face of the earth for good. Usually, styles make a



By **SCOTT CERNEK**
Columnist

return after a decade or two, but not the leisure suit. Like very few things in this world, they have never come back around.

The only other time that I had bought a new suit was in 1997 for one of my uncle's

funerals. I remember showing up with a shirt and tie and one of my older brothers took me to JC Penny and bought one for me. He even bought me a new shirt and tie to go with it. I was a very poor schoolteacher at the time with four kids and he had just begun a new higher paying job. It was very generous of him, to say the least. Anyway, that black suit has been my "Go-To" for the past twenty-seven years. During that time, I have officiated about forty weddings and another fifty or sixty funerals, all while wearing that same black suit.

Well, our last child is set to get married this Friday and my wife was wondering if I was going to rent a tux for the wedding. Since I have been thinking about purchasing a new suit for several years, I decided to take a look at what my options were. After looking at about ten different styles and colors, we decided that it was time to bite the

bullet and buy a new gray one. It actually isn't all that much more than renting a tux when you compare the prices, and it will be nice to have a new one to wear for future funerals and weddings that I may officiate. The nice man in the shop advised that all I would have to do is pick out a new shirt and tie and it would make each occasion special.

Speaking of weddings, we now have all four of our kids married off. To date, the first three have blessed us with twelve grandchildren and two more on the way. Each family is so unique and provides such a blessing to my wife and I whenever we get together. It's especially fun when all of the families get together at the same time. The only difference in getting together one family at a time or when we all get together is that the grandkids

See SUIT, Page 8

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Dying and disabled Illinois prisoners kept behind bars, despite new medical release law

The Joe Coleman Medical Release Act was expected to have freed hundreds of terminally ill and medically incapacitated prisoners in Illinois by now. But only a few dozen have been released, an investigation from Injustice Watch and WBEZ reveals

By Carlos Ballesteros (Injustice Watch), Shannon Hefferman (WBEZ) and Amy Qin (WBEZ)

Editor's note: This article was produced by WBEZ, Chicago's NPR news station, and Injustice Watch, a nonprofit news organization in Chicago focused on issues of equity and justice in the court system.

Phillip Merritt's dementia is so advanced he's lost the ability to speak. But with the help of his cellmates at Western Illinois Correctional Center, the 71-year-old still manages to get on the phone with his brother every few weeks.

"He has to have someone call me, and then I don't know what to say to him because he can't understand anything, so I'll just talk," said Merritt's brother, Michael Merritt, in an interview. "All he can say are two words. ... I mean, he's just gone."

Merritt's deteriorating condition makes him a prime candidate to get out of prison under the Joe Coleman Medical Release Act, a pivotal criminal justice reform bill touted by Gov. JB Pritzker and Illinois Democrats as an effective way to alleviate the state's decrepit prison health care system, reduce the "staggering" costs of caring for ailing people in prison, and reunite families with frail loved ones.

Under the act—named after a decorated Army veteran who died of prostate cancer while incarcerated—Illinois prisoners can request early release if they're terminally ill and expected to die within 18

months or if they're medically incapacitated and need help with more than one activity of daily living, such as eating or using the bathroom.

But a year-and-a-half since the Coleman Act went into effect, an investigation by Injustice Watch and WBEZ found far fewer prisoners have been released under the law than expected, as the medical release process has become mired in the charged politics of criminal justice reform in the post-George Floyd era.

Behind the lower-than-expected numbers is the Prisoner Review Board, a state body appointed by Pritzker and confirmed by the Illinois Senate with final say on medical release requests.

As of mid-August, the board had denied nearly two-thirds of medical release requests from dying and disabled prisoners who met the medical criteria to get out of prison under the Coleman Act—including Merritt. "I couldn't believe it," his brother said. "How could they deny him? He can't even talk!"

More than half of the 94 denied applicants were older than age 60, and half had spent at least 15 years behind bars, according to an analysis of state prison data. At least two died in prison, including an 81-year-old who had been incarcerated for more than three decades and was scheduled to be released in 2025. Another man died five days before the board denied his request.

Meanwhile, the Prisoner Review Board has only granted 52 medical releases—a

rate of fewer than three releases per month on average since board members began voting on those requests, records show.

Advocates say the board is undermining the Coleman Act and forcing ill-equipped prison staff to care for dying and disabled prisoners, even those with families practically begging to take them off their hands. "Our prison system is now completely overburdened by people who pose absolutely no risk to public safety but are tremendously expensive to care for," said Jennifer Soble, lead author of the Coleman Act and executive director of the Illinois Prison Project, a nonprofit legal group that represents dozens of medical release applicants. "From a cost-saving perspective, from a government-efficiency perspective, and truly from a moral perspective, we need to be doing something differently here," she said.

Donald Shelton, chair of the Prisoner Review Board, declined an interview request, but he defended the board's record on medical release requests in an email sent through a spokesperson. "Each case that comes before the board comes with its own set of circumstances to be studied and evaluated by members," he wrote. "Due diligence is given by the board to every person who sets a petition before them."

More medical releases could save taxpayers millions
It's unclear exactly how

many of Illinois' nearly 30,000 prisoners could qualify for medical release. Under the Coleman Act, the Illinois Department of Corrections is required to keep track of that number, but department officials said they don't have it yet. A department spokesperson said the data would be published by year's end. What is clear, from years of scathing reports from an independent monitor appointed by a federal judge, is Illinois prisons are unfit to provide health care for the thousands of aging, disabled and incapacitated prisoners.

Half of the state's prison medical staff jobs are currently vacant. Prisoners with mobility issues suffer bed sores and frequent falls because no one is around to care for them. Some are even left sitting in their own waste, according to the monitor's reports. "Prescriptions go unrefilled, cancers go undiagnosed. In the worst cases, as everyone here knows, people die painful deaths because of the lack of care," attorney Camille Bennett with the ACLU of Illinois said at a recent hearing on health care in state prisons.

Even this substandard care is expensive. Illinois paid \$250 million last fiscal year to Wexford Health Sources, a for-profit company contracted to provide health care to state prisoners, according to state

records. Wexford's 10-year contract expired in 2021, but the company continues providing care as Illinois seeks new bidders. Releasing more people under the Coleman Act could bring down the long-term cost of prison health care, said Alan Mills, executive director of the Uptown People's Law Center, a legal clinic in Chicago whose lawsuits against the state led to the appointment of the independent monitor. "The more prisoners there are who are medically needy, the higher the cost of caring for them, and the higher the bids will be," Mills said.

Conversely, if the Prisoner Review Board approved more medical releases, the cost savings for taxpayers in the long term could be in the millions, Mills said. Daniel Conn, chief executive of Wexford Health Sources, did not respond to an interview request. LaToya Hughes, acting director of the Illinois Department of Corrections, declined to comment.

There are other, more immediate savings for Illinois taxpayers if more ailing prisoners were released, Mills said. A recent government report showed Illinois spends more than \$76,000 on average to incarcerate a single person for a year. Experts say terminally ill and incapacitated prisoners are much more ex-

pensive to care for. Prisoners whose medical needs can't be met in prison infirmaries are escorted to and from hospitals by guards. With prisons short-staffed, officers already routinely require overtime pay.

By refusing to release more ailing prisoners, the Prisoner Review Board is also making it harder for prison medical staff to care for everyone else, Mills said. "What limited resources we have are being devoted to people who are most seriously mentally or physically ill, and that doesn't leave any health care for anybody else at all," he said.

At the same time, the overburdened health care system is also blocking more prisoners from getting out under the Coleman Act. Prisoners must be found qualified for medical release by a prison doctor or nurse before the board votes on their case. But prisoners often wait weeks or months to know whether they'll qualify, records show. In one case, a prisoner at Illinois River Correctional Center waited 152 days before finding out he didn't qualify for release, records show.

Prison medical staff have said 240 prisoners who applied were unqualified for medical release. At least a handful of those prisoners lived in a prison infirmary.

See PRISONERS, Page 19

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Around the Northern Hills



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

The Young Leaders Committee will have their next meeting on Sunday, Sept. 10 at 7 p.m. at the farm bureau office in Elizabeth. Anyone between the ages of 18 and 35 that has an interest in agriculture is welcome to attend. For more information, call our office at 815-858-2235.

Truck Driving Scholarships offered

Applicants enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a commercial driver training program at an Illinois Community College are encouraged to apply. Five \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded every three months and are based on the Illinois Farm Bureau region where the applicant resides. All applicants must be Illinois residents and must provide proof of enrollment in during the corresponding award cycle. Additionally, an endorsement is required from a farmer, County Farm Bureau leader, agribusiness, or food processing business.

Full eligibility guidelines and the link to apply is available on the Foundation website www.iaafoundation.org. For more

information, contact the IAA Foundation at 309-557-2232, or e-mail Jennifer Smith at jsmith@ilfb.org

Ag in the Classroom Freezer Meal Fundraiser

Do you want home cooked meals, but are short on time? I have the perfect solution for you! Take part in the Ag in the Classroom Freezer Meal Fundraiser. You will get 10 meals frozen that are ready to re-heat. Each meal feeds 3-5 people. The cost is \$195 for the set.

The 10 meals include:

- 1) Pulled Pork
- 2) Smoked Pork Chops
- 3) BBQ Meatballs
- 4) Broccoli Cheese Soup
- 5) Smoked Pork Loin
- 6) Meatloaf w/ Sweet Potatoes
- 7) Lasagna
- 8) Chicken & Biscuits
- 9) Pulled Pork Mac & Cheese
- 10) Chicken Bacon Ranch Pasta

Crop Cover Field Day

Mark your calendars. The cover crop field day is set for Friday, Sept. 15 beginning at 11:30 a.m. It will be held at the first field entrance south of 4629 IL Route 78 on the east side

of 78 (south of Stockton).

Member exclusive trips

Do you want to travel? We have some pretty awesome trips planned as member exclusive trips. See our website for more details!

Charleston, Savannah, & Jekyll Island: March 15-21, 2024
Canadian Rockies, Lethbridge, & Calgary Stampede: July 3-9, 2024
Danube Explorer - Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, Germany, Czech Republic: Aug. 24-Sept. 3, 2024

For full details on any of the trips, visit our website at www.jodaviesscfb.com or stop at our office to pick up a brochure.

Family Farm Signs

As we are nearing the end of summer, we all start thinking of back to school and the fall weather coming soon. There's still time to do some work around the farm and spruce things up a bit. Why not add a "This is a Family Farm" sign to your landscape? The signs are 17.5" X 23" and cost \$30. Stop by our office and pick one up.

Farm Fun Fact

September is National Honey Month.

Church news

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

All are invited to worship at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 118 E. Mason St. Lena, IL on Sunday, Sept. 10 for Sunday Worship Service. The reading will be from Matthew 18:15-20.

On Wednesday, Sept. 13 Peace Corps Quilting group will meet from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. No quilting experience is necessary. On Thursday Sept. 14 the Friendship Club will meet at 12:30 p.m. for a pot-luck dinner and entertainment by Deb Leininger.

All services will be recorded and available on the church's Facebook page and website. Please visit <http://goodshepherdlena.org/> or and Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/GSLCLenaIL> for more information. Please contact the church office at 815-369-5552 with any questions.

St. John's Lutheran Church

St. John's Lutheran Church, Pearl City will celebrate the fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost on Sept. 10.

The September Grace meal will be on Sunday, Sept. 17 and will include meatloaf, mashed potatoes with gravy, mixed vegetables, Jell-O with fruit, and dessert. Reservations for curbside pick-up are due by Sept. 14. Call the church office to reserve your meal for curbside pick-up. This meal is funded through the generosity of a grant received by The Foundation of Northwest Illinois.

The VBS event on Sunday, Sept. 10 has been cancelled but there will be a special Children's Sermon and Sunday School on Sept. 17 that will include the Bible story and craft. The 6th-8th grade Confirmation group will meet after worship on Sept. 17 as well.

The Healthy Wolves group will be packing backpacks on Thursday, Sept. 7 at 3 p.m.

The Women's Gathering group is hosting a bible study and lunch on Tuesday, Sept. 19 at Route 20 Bar & Grill at 9:45. If interested in attending, sign up in the church lobby or call the church office.

St. John's Lutheran Church

of Pearl City is an ELCA parish and is located at 229 First St. in Pearl City. We are handicapped accessible. To contact the pastor or church please call 815-443-2215.

Salem United Church of Christ

All are welcome to join for service led by Pastor Christopher Ham at Salem United Church of Christ, 8491 West Salem Road, Lena, Illinois, on Sunday, Sept. 10, 2023, at 10 a.m. The Adult Sunday School will be held prior to service starting at 9 a.m. on the lower level of the church. Children's Sunday School is held during church service at 10 a.m.

The Wednesday Breakfast Bunch will meet Wednesday, Sept. 13 at 8 a.m. at Amigo's, 306 North Galena Avenue, Freeport, Illinois. Everyone is welcome to join.

If interested in getting more involved in the church community, check out the monthly gatherings. Men's Night is at 6:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. During this time the men playing games and get to know each other better. Bible Study is offered at 6:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. Craftroom is held from 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month. During this time there are snacks, a brief devotional thought, and plenty of time to work on crafts individually or together. All of the events are hosted on the lower level of Salem United Church of Christ, and all are welcome to join. For more information on any of these gatherings, please contact salemwingsofjoy@yahoo.com.

Evangelical Free Church of Lena

All are invited to stop by the Evangelical Free Church of Lena booth at the Lena Lions Fall festival on Saturday, Sept. 9 to meet the new pastor, Casey Dwyer. Pastor Casey will be in the church booth following the parade at approximately 1:30 to 3 p.m. He is looking forward to experiencing the Fall festival and greeting as many members of the community as possible!

'Surge' in organization efforts has labor leaders optimistic for the future

'State of the Unions' report shows increased organizing activity

By Peter Hancock
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

As workers in Illinois celebrated Labor Day on Monday, a new report shows there has

been a surge in efforts to organize labor unions in workplaces throughout the state, while overall public approval of labor unions nationally is

the highest in nearly six decades. In 2022, there were 72 successful petitions to organize labor unions in Illinois, which represent 9,600 new unionized workers, the highest single-year numbers at any point in the last decade. That's according to The State of the Unions 2023, an annual report by the Illinois Economic Policy Institute, a think tank with strong ties to organized labor, and the Center for Middle Class Revival at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

After decades of declining union membership and de-

clining unionization rates, U of I's Robert Bruno, a co-author of the report, said those numbers may signal a resurgence in the labor movement.

"That's kind of a leading indicator of an upsurge, of growth in the movement," Bruno said in an interview. "And if you look at where you're seeing organizing happening—in a lot of growth sectors with larger numbers of employees—then you see the kinds of conditions for increasing the actual density of the labor movement."

See SURGE, Page 13

Pork Chop/Ice Cream Social

at Zion Community Church
10100 Sabin Church Road, Pearl City, IL

Sunday, Sept. 10
11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Bouncy House for Children

Pork Chop Sandwich Meal and Hot Dog Meal

- 1 Pork Chop Dinner \$8.00
- 2 Pork Chop Dinner \$10.00
- Hot Dog Meal \$5.00

Dinner includes:

Sandwich(s), choice of dessert and
Choice of 3: Potato Salad, Baked Beans, Apple Sauce or Mrs. Mikes Chips

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Our Area Churches Welcome You

APPLE RIVER UMC

102 E. Baldwin St., P.O. Box 188,
Apple River, IL 61001
Pastor Libby Rutherford (815) 990-1428
Church (815) 594-2223
• **Sunday Worship – 9 a.m.**
• Bible Study - Every Monday 9 a.m.
Friendly Folks - Casual Attire - Join Us!

CALVARY CHURCH OF STOCKTON

315 W. Maple St., Stockton, IL 61085
815-947-2414
E-Mail: calvarychurchofstockton@yahoo.com
• **Sunday Worship – 10:00 a.m.**
• **Sunday School – 8:45 a.m.**
• Communion and Potluck every 1st Sunday (except no potlucks during summer)
• Wednesday Night Bible Study - 6:30 p.m.
• Every other Sat. Youth Group - 6 - 8 p.m.
You may find our facebook page and weekly messages by searching for "Calvary Church of Stockton on facebook.com
You are welcome! Please visit us!

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH ELCA STOCKTON

600 N. Main St., Stockton
Pastor Chrissy Salser (815) 988-9450
E-Mail: clc600@mediacombb.net
Find us on Facebook at [ChristOnMainSt](https://www.facebook.com/ChristOnMainSt)
• **Worship times: Saturday, 5:30 p.m.**
Sunday, 10 a.m.
• **Sunday School: Sunday, 9 a.m.**

EBENEZER – SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

P.O. Box 102, Pearl City, IL 61062
Currently served by Guest Speakers
See Facebook or call 815-291-1965
• **Sunday Worship: Currently 8:30 a.m.**
(may vary)
Services alternate monthly at 2 locations
• Sept. services are at Salem UCC Church
Corner of Loran & Kent Roads

EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF LENA

720 N. Freedom Street, Lena, IL 61048
815-369-5591
Pastor Casey Dwyer, Pastor
• Adult bible study and Children's Sunday School - 8:45 a.m.
• **Sunday Morning Worship Service and Children's Church/Nursery – 10:00 a.m.**
• Awana Wednesdays at 6 p.m. (Sept. - April)
• Pastor's weekly sermons at www.lenafreechurch.org

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

309 S. Main Street, Elizabeth, IL 61028
email: firstumcofelizabeth@gmail.com
Pastor Donna Hoffman 608-293-0163
email: dhoffman8@gmail.com
• **Sunday Worship - 8:30 a.m.**
• Women's Faith Group -
1st Tuesday monthly - 9:30 a.m.
We are handicapped accessible
Find us on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/fumcelizabeth

GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH

118 East Mason Street, Lena, IL 61048
Vicar Thomas Mosbo (815) 369-5552
• **Sunday Worship – 9:30 a.m.**
• **Sunday School – 10:45 a.m. (Sept. - May)**
• Piece Corps Quilters –
Wednesdays at 8:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH OF WOODBINE

1904 S. Vel Tera Road, Elizabeth, IL 61028
Pastor Michael Burdett (815) 858-3843
• **Sunday Worship – 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.**
• **Sunday School – 9:30 a.m.**
• Prayer meeting – Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m.
Sunday services broadcasted at 11:30 a.m. on
Radio WCCI 100.3 FM

HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH

223 E. Front Avenue, Stockton, IL 61085
Father Mike Morrissey (815) 947-2545
• **Saturday Evening Mass – 4:30 p.m.**
• **Sunday Mass – 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m.**
and 5:00 p.m.
• Reconciliation Saturday – 3:30 - 4:15 p.m.
• Parish Hall for Rent – Seats 200

LENA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

118 West Mason Street, Lena, IL 61048
Pastor Melwyn Alagodi (815) 369-5291
• **Sunday Worship – 9:00 a.m.**
• **Sunday School – 10:30 a.m.**
• **Daily Dial-A-Devotion 815-369-4411**

MARTINTOWN COMMUNITY CHURCH

W8996 Lena St., Martintown, WI 53522
(1 mile north of Winslow, IL)
Pastor Kevin Cernek • 608-558-0974
• **Sunday Worship – 8 & 10:30 a.m.**
Worship inside or watch from the parking lot on the jumbotron
• **Sunday School for all ages – 9:30 a.m.**
• **Sunday Youth – 6 p.m.**
• **Tuesday Bible Study - 10:30 a.m.**
• **Thursday Prayer & Bible Study - 6 p.m.**

McCONNELL COMMUNITY CHURCH

211 Hulbert Rd. P.O. Box 97,
McConnell, IL 61050
815-868-2324
Email: mcconnellcmtychurch@yahoo.com
Pastor Jordan Cernek
• **Sunday Worship – 9:00 a.m.**
Fellowship hour after every service
Find us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/mcconnellcommunitychurch.com
* *We are handicapped accessible*

PEARL CITY FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

411 S. Main Street, PO Box 236,
Pearl City, IL 61062
815-443-2177
email: pearlcityumc@gmail.com
Website: pearlcityumc.org
Find us on facebook at
www.facebook.com/pcumcil
Pastor Roger Bronkema (815) 291-6261
email: rbronkema18@gmail.com
• **Sunday Worship – 8:45 a.m.**
• **Communion Every First Sunday**
• **Monthly Fellowship Breakfast**
* Handicapped accessible

PROVIDENCE PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH

15010 W. Howardsville Road
Lena, IL 61048
217-357-3723
Pastors Robert Webb & Rob Webb
• **Sunday Worship**
- each 3rd Sunday - 10:30 a.m.
Potluck lunch following service

SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

8491 West Salem Road, Lena, IL 61048
(Turn on Salem Road at Eleroy Rest Stop)
(815) 369-4511
Pastor Christopher Ham
• **Sunday Worship – 10:00 a.m.**

SCHAPVILLE ZION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

635 East Schapville Road,
Elizabeth, IL 61028
Pastor Dottie Morizzo
(815) 845-2272
Cell (815) 238-0670
www.schapvillezion.org
• **Sunday Worship Service – 10:00 a.m.**
• **Sunday School – 10:00 a.m.**
• Bible Study Classes Available

SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS LUTHERAN CHURCH

536 E. Schapville Road,
Scales Mound, IL 61054
Church number (815) 845-2061
Rev. James Mehlretter
Website: www.shepherdofhill.com
• **Sunday Worship – 8:00 a.m. & 10:00 a.m.**
• **Sunday School (Sept. – May) – 8:45 a.m.**
• Holy Communion is celebrated weekly.

ST. ANN CATHOLIC CHURCH

608 East Railroad, Warren, IL 61087
Father Andrew Hernandez (815) 745-2312
• **Sunday Mass – 8:00 a.m.**
• Reconciliation Sunday – 7:30 - 7:50 a.m.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
625 Country Lane Drive, Lena, IL 61048
Rev. Rick Bader (815) 369-4035
• **Saturday Evening Worship – 5:30 p.m.**
• **Sunday Worship – 8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.**
• Blast Program at 9:00 a.m.
• High School & Adult Sunday School at 9:15 a.m.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
229 S. First St., Pearl City, IL 61062
www.stjohnspearlcity.org
815-443-2215
• **Sunday Morning Worship – 9:00 a.m.**
• Christian Education for all Ages - 10:15 a.m.
Handicapped Accessible

ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

8315 S. Massbach Road, Elizabeth, IL 61028
Pastor David Russell
Church: 815-589-3367
• **Sunday Worship – 10:00 a.m.**
"Celebrating 165 Years of Faith"

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

105 West Webster, Apple River, IL 61001
Father Andrew Hernandez (815) 745-2312
• **Saturday Mass – 6:00 p.m.**
• Reconciliation Saturday – 5:30 – 5:50 p.m.

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

410 West Lena Street, Lena, IL 61048
Father Andrew Hernandez (815) 369-2810
• **Saturday Mass – 4:00 p.m.**
• **Sunday Mass – 10:00 a.m.**
• Reconciliation Saturday – 3:30 – 3:50 p.m.

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH - KENT

The Little Church with a Big Heart
1334 Sunnyside Road, Kent, IL 61044
1/2 mile north on Kent Road
• **Sunday Worship – 9:30 a.m.**
• **Holy Communion every Sunday**
• Women Meet at 9 a.m. on the 2nd Sunday
• Chair Lift to Sanctuary

WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Corner of Hudson & Benton St.,
Stockton, IL 61085
Pastor Melwyn Alagodi (815) 947-2541
• **Sunday Worship – 11 a.m.**
• Adult Bible Studies Available
• Communion Every 1st Sunday
• First Sunday potluck following church services.
Find us on website StocktonWUMC.org
or Facebook-Stockton Wesley United Methodist Church
* *Handicapped Accessible*

WILLOW UNITED METHODIST

6522 S. Willow Road, Stockton, IL 61085
Pastor Cheryl Carroll (815) 541-7020
• **Weekly Sunday Worship – 9:30 a.m.**
with community fellowship following
• **Sunday School – 11 a.m.**
www.willowfolkfestival.com

WINSLOW GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

197 Carver Street, Winslow, IL 61089
Pastor Robert Patin (815) 230-1862
608-669-5770
• **Sunday Worship – 10:45 a.m.**
• **Sunday School – 9:45 a.m.**

ZION COMMUNITY CHURCH

10100 W. Sabin Church Rd.,
Pearl City, IL 61062
Pastor Wayne Fischer • 815-266-6260
Pastor Chip Sohl • 815-541-1425
• **Sunday Worship Service – 9:00 a.m.**
• **Children's Church - during church service**
• **Prayer Shawl Knitting Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.**
• **Bible Study Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.**



• Suit (Continued from page 4)

have so much fun playing with their cousins that they kind of forget about Grandpa and Grandma, unless I get out the whiffle ball and bat. They love baseball and they all come running. The older ones especially are really starting to spank the ball good. There are always some great opportunities for a little character building as we play. It's a lot like teaching my gym classes at school. I tell my classes that I have three rules, respect, respect, and respect. Respect for others, respect for themselves and respect for the rules of whatever game we are playing. I guess once a coach, always a coach. Jesus did a lot of coaching

when He was on this earth. He started out with a team of twelve disciples whom He guided and challenged each and every day. In Luke 9:22-23 we read, And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." I'm sure Jesus went on to tell them how to do these things.

"Come after me" means to become a disciple and requires that a disciple number one, deny himself. This means not simply denying certain things but denying personal control of

one's life. Number two shows true commitment. Jesus said to take up his cross and make a commitment that will lead to rejection and possibly even to the point of death. Number three, Jesus said is to "follow me." In Jesus' day, "follow me" also meant joining the company of his

disciples who traveled in ministry with Jesus around Palestine. Today, we have the same choices to make if we are going to become His followers. Giving our hearts to Jesus means He owns us and that leads to eternal life.

Until next week, God bless!

Guidelines for writing, submitting a letter to the editor

Rock Valley Publishing encourages readers to reach out to the community by writing a letter to the editor.

Letters are limited to 500 words. Authors must include their first and last name, the city or village in which they reside, and a phone number and email address where they can be reached in case of questions.

Send letters to: scoopshopper@rvpublishing.com
Letter-writers will be limited to one letter per month except for locally elected officials, or individuals specifically associated with local village governments or entities such as school districts, park districts or library districts.

No letters directed to a third party will be accepted for publication.

We reserve the right to edit a letter for reasons of clarity, space restrictions and libel.

• Trustee (Continued from page 2)

responsibilities of standing up as a voice of equity and inclusion for all students and residents in the counties I serve."

She believes representing HCC at both ICCTA and ACCT puts the Northwest Illinois region on the map. She likes having a voice and is humble and confident in representing the communities in the district. "Our community college system is and will be a game changer for our region, from CDL driving courses and welding certificates to smooth transfer programs with area four-year institutions," said Groezinger. "I believe in Highland, our students and our communities, and am focused on living up to our mission of shaping futures by providing quality education and learning opportunities through programs and services that encourage personal and professional growth."

She is currently serving on the Tyler's Justice Center Board of Directors (a non-

profit children's advocacy center), the Illinois Bank & Trust NW IL Commercial and Community Development Board, the Illinois Grain & Feed Legislative Committee & Scholarship Committee, and the Pearl City Elevator (PCE) Empowering Foundation. She is also a member of the Society of Human Resource Management, the National FFA Alumni Association, and the Women's Enrichment Network of the Greater Freeport Partnership, as well as previous years of service on the University of Illinois Extension Council, township government and Stockton Strong community development committee.

Groezinger is starting her 33rd year of serving the agriculture industry working for Pearl City Elevator as the Chief Customer and People Officer (CCPO). Her leadership from both a personal and professional point of view contributes to a well-rounded voice of reason for area farmers, employees, and the agriculture industry.

She is a background cheerleader for her son's flower farm business, Clara Joyce Flowers. When not working for PCE or volunteering, she can be found helping support her son Drew's growing flower production and wedding design business.

"Living out my family's legacy of faith, I am active in the same country church my great-grandfather helped build," she adds.

• SOS+ (Continued from page 2)

SOS+ meets at 2 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month, March through December. Anyone interested in volunteering by joining the planning committee, sharing their talents, or suggesting

upcoming programs, please call Mary Feltmeyer 815-297-5425, Nancy Rice 815-275-0303 or Shirley Toepfer 815-947-3639. Please also call if in need of a ride to attend the program.

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Blackhawks finding success under new volleyball coach

By Trenten Scheidegger
CORRESPONDENT

After going 14-17-2 in 2022, the Stockton Blackhawks look like they are well on their way to improving that record in their 2023 volleyball season. This year, the Blackhawks are under a new head coach in Mad-die Pontius. Through a few early season matchups and some tournament play, the Blackhawks and Pontius are continuing to find ways to win.

Stockton's 2023 season began on Wednesday, Aug. 23 when they hit the road to face off with the Morrison Mustangs. It was a good early season test for the Blackhawks as the Mustangs presented some adversity from the very start.

Stockton dropped Pontius' first set as head coach by a score of 22-25. Right away, Pontius got the oppor-

tunity to see how her team would respond. The Blackhawks didn't disappoint as they bounced back with a 25-20 in the second set. In the third and final set, the Blackhawks mounted a full comeback, winning 25-18, and claiming victory in their first match of the season.

Stockton's offense has a versatile attack, and that was put on display on day one. Freshman Taylor Haas led the team with seven kills. Kately Winters was next up with six and Kacy Wright finished with four. Winters and Wright, both juniors, make it so anyone can lead the Blackhawks on offense on any given day. Their ability to attack from multiple angles has given the Blackhawks their early success.

Stockton took their momentum into the next day when they played their home

opener against the Pearl City Wolves. This time, Stockton didn't let that first set slip away as they picked up a 25-22 victory. In the second set, the Blackhawks sealed the game with a 25-17 victory to sweep the Wolves.

Haas led the team in kills with four. Dylann Broshous, another junior, stepped up for three kills of her own. Defensively, Haas also led the way with two solo blocks. Winters and Emily Broshous were both all over the place on defense as they each finished with 11 digs.

After the two early season matchups, the Blackhawks prepared for a big day as they went to compete in the Galena Tournament. There, they faced off with Warren, Glenbard North, Pecatonica, and Winnebago. Bright and early the Blackhawks got the day started right with a 2-0 win over Warren. Stock-

ton picked up the sweep with scores of 21-14 and 21-15. Dylann Broshous and Kaydra Wright led the way on defense as they combined for 17 digs in the win. Lauren Williams and Maddie McKee gave it their best efforts as they led Warren with three kills each.

After that, the Blackhawks went on to split games with Glenbard North and Pecatonica. Unable to come out on top of either of those matchups, the Blackhawks found themselves as the one seed in the silver bracket. Unfortunately for Stockton, that's where their luck ran dry. The Winnebago Indians proved to be too much in the first game of bracket play as the Blackhawks fell by scores of 25-13 and 25-19.

After the tournament, the Blackhawks returned home with an overall record

of 3-1-2. Their next week began with a home match-up against the Orangeville Broncos on Monday, Aug. 28. The Broncos look like an exceptional team early on, and the Blackhawks caught a glimpse of that in their matchup. It was a great battle as Stockton took the first set by a score of 25-23. This time, the Blackhawks found themselves on the other end of the comeback as the Broncos responded by taking the second and third sets.

Stockton didn't have to wait long to bounce back, however. The very next day, the Blackhawks were back at home to play host to the Polo Marcos. It wasn't given to them, however. The Blackhawks had to fight their way to a 25-23 victory in the first set. The second set was even tighter, but Stockton managed to pick

up the sweep with a 26-24 victory. It's not often you see a sweep when the games were decided by just four total points, but the Blackhawks pulled it off for their fourth victory of the season.

This time, it was Gabbi VenHuizen who led the team with five kills. Ireland Mensendike, Emily Broshous, and Eve Moore each finished with four kills as well. Once again, the Blackhawks put their offensive versatility on display. VenHuizen also led the team defensively with two total blocks, while Kacy Wright had 13 digs.

After getting off to a 4-1-2 start, the Blackhawks look to keep it rolling on Thursday, Sept. 7 when they travel to face off with the Scales Mound Hornets. On Tuesday, Sept. 12 Stockton has a tough matchup as they play host to the Galena Pirates.

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River Ridge

(Continued from front page)

Wildcats picked up victories of 25-12 and 25-18.

Albrecht went back to attacking with force as she led the team with nine kills. Miller was next up with four, and Bond finished with a pair of kills herself. Ava Ketelson stepped up at the net to lead the team with two solo blocks. Amie Richmond led the way in digs with five. Haas and Miller facilitated the offense as they each combined for 15 assists in the victory.

River Ridge appeared to lose their momentum in the championship game where they faced off with Barneveld. In the first set, the Wildcats suffered a bleak 25-14 loss to Barneveld. River Ridge couldn't bounce back as they found themselves on the other side of the broom, losing 2-0 to Barneveld.

The good news for the Wildcats was that they got to head back home where they are comfortable and play host to the Pearl City Wolves for more NUIC action. The Wildcats had a point to prove as they put their talents on display against the Wolves. They made quick work of Pearl City in the first set,

winning by a score of 25-12. The second set went in similar fashion as the Wildcats picked up another sweep, winning by a score of 25-18.

It was a team effort as Albrecht led the way with six kills, while Bond and Miller each had four. Ketelson once again led the way in solo blocks with two. Evie Walters put in work defensively, leading the team with eight digs.

Through seven games, the Wildcats held an impressive record of 5-2. If they can continue to put in an all-around effort, the Wildcats appear poised for another 20-win season in 2023. They will continue their campaign on Thursday, Sept. 14 when they travel to face off with East Dubuque.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Little Blackhawks

Pictured are the first Little Blackhawks from Stockton Elementary for this school year. These students are starting the year off great following the Blackhawk Way!

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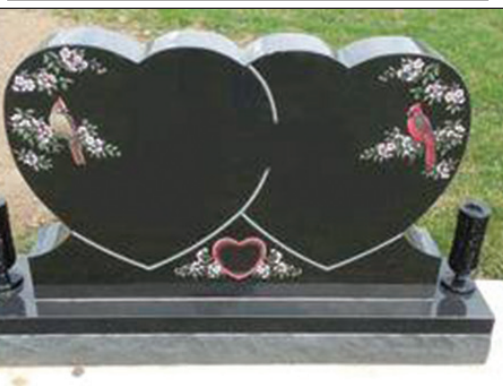
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Surge (Continued from page 6)

While the rate of unionized workers in Illinois had increased in 2020—followed by a boost of nearly 16,000 new unionized workers the following year—the state saw declines in both metrics in the past year, according to the report. That continued the downward trend in unionization in the last decade. In 2022, there were 734,430 unionized workers in Illinois, which represented 13.1 percent of the state's total workforce.

The report attributes that to a shift in the state's economy away from manufacturing and other unionized sectors toward more service- and knowledge-based industries with low unionization rates. It also cites a large number of vacancies in federal, state and local government positions, which make up the bulk of union membership.

The authors also attribute

some of that to the 2018 U.S. Supreme Court case, Janus v. the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which struck down an Illinois law that required public employees who chose not to join the union representing their shop to nevertheless pay a portion of their union dues known as "fair share" or "agency fees." Those fees covered a portion of the union's costs for collective bargaining. "State and local government vacancies increased 78 percent following Janus as wages in the public sector failed to keep pace with those in the private sector," said ILEP's Frank Manzo IV, the other coauthor of the report. "And in Illinois, unfilled positions at public school districts rose 164 percent. And Illinois also had thousands of vacant state local government jobs and in 2022 ... So it's the labor shortage that's in part

caused by the Janus decision because workers are dissatisfied with pay in the public sector."

Statewide, public sector union membership has fallen by about 24,000, or 3.3 percent, since the Janus decision and now averages around 334,000. Still, the report notes, Illinois' unionization rate of 13.1 percent of its workforce is significantly higher than the national average of 10.1 percent. Nationwide, however, total union membership grew in 2022 to nearly 14.3 million workers, the first time that has happened since 2017. The report cites an August 2022 Gallup poll that found 71 percent of Americans say they approve of labor unions, up from 68 percent the year before and the highest union approval rating Gallup had recorded since 1965.

The demographics of union

membership have also been changing, with younger workers aged 25-34 making up a larger share of the total. Since 2019, that age group saw a 2.3 percentage point increase in unionization. By contrast, there were declines in unionization among workers aged 35-44 and older workers over 65. Unionization rates were highest among people with master's degrees but lowest among people with less than a high school diploma as well as people with professional or doctorate degrees. The top four industries by unionization rates were public administration, construction, transportation and utilities, and the combined educational and health services industry.

The report notes that the manufacturing workforce, historically a leader in industrial unionization, is now only 8.8 percent organized in Illinois.

Learn about sepsis prevention, recognition, actions to take at FHN Event

September is Sepsis Awareness Month, and FHN will present a free Speaker Series event on the condition Sept. 20 in Freeport. "Sepsis is the body's extreme response to an infection," said FHN Stroke and Sepsis Program Coordinator Tracy Love, MSN, RN, CNL. "It's a chain reaction across the body that, without timely treatment, can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and unfortunately even death."

Love and FHN Clinical Quality Analyst Kristina Stadermann, BSN, RN will talk about the infections that can lead to sepsis, how to recognize its symptoms and available treatment options at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 20 at the FHN Family Healthcare Center – Burchard Hills, 1010 W. Fairway Drive in Freeport.

This program is free to attend, but registration is requested. For more information or to register online, visit www.fhn.org/speakerseries or call 1-877-600-0346, ext. 901.



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LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT STEPHENSON COUNTY, ILLINOIS ROCKET MORTGAGE, LLC F/K/A QUICKEN LOANS, LLC, PLAINTIFF, VS. AMBER M VAUGHAN; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, DEFENDANTS.

NO. 23 FC 43 201 AND 201 1/2 WEST BROADWAY STREET FREEPORT, IL 61032 JUDGE

PRESIDING JUDGE NOTICE BY PUBLICATION NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO YOU,

Amber M Vaughan Unknown Owners and Non-Record Claimants defendants, that this case has been commenced in this Court against you and other defendants, asking for the foreclosure of a certain Mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to wit:

PART OF LOT ONE (1) IN BLOCK THIRTY (30) OF KNOWLTON'S SECOND ADDITION TO THE TOWN (NOW CITY) OF FREEPORT, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED JUNE 4, 1850 IN DEED BOOK I, PAGE 122 DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS, TO-WIT: BEGINNING AT THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF SAID LOT ONE (1); RUNNING THENCE SOUTH ON AND ALONG THE LINE BETWEEN SAID LOT AND SOUTH OAK AVENUE TO A POINT, SAID POINT BEING 154 FEET NORTH OF THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SAID LOT THENCE WEST PARALLEL WITH THE SOUTH LINE OF SAID LOT TO THE WEST LINE THEREOF; THENCE NORTH ON AND ALONG THE WEST LINE OF SAID LOT TO THE SOUTH LINE OF WEST BROADWAY STREET THENCE SOUTHEASTERLY ON AND ALONG THE LINE BETWEEN SAID LOT AND WEST BROADWAY STREET TO THE PLACE OF BEGINNING. EXCEPT THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED TRACT

COMMENCING AT A POINT ON THE EAST LINE OF SAID LOT ONE (1), 154 FEET NORTH OF THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SAID LOT RUNNING THENCE NORTH ON THE SAID LAST LINE 4 FEET THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY IN A STRAIGHT LINE TO A POINT ON THE WEST LINE OF SAID LOT ONE (1), 154 FEET NORTH OF THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF SAID LOT THENCE EAST A DISTANCE OF 76.4 FEET, MORE OR LESS PARALLEL WITH THE SOUTH LINE OF SAID LOT ONE (1) TO THE PLACE OF BEGINNING.; SITUATED IN THE TOWNSHIP OF FREEPORT, COUNTY OF STEPHENSON AND STATE OF ILLINOIS.

Commonly known as: 201 and 201 1/2 West Broadway Street

Freeport, IL 61032 and which said Mortgage was made by,

Amber M Vaughan Mortgageor(s), to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. as nominee for Rocket Mortgage, LLC

Mortgagee, and recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds of Stephenson County, Illinois, as Document No. 202200193667; and for other relief.

UNLESS YOU file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case, on or before September 22, 2023, A JUDGMENT OR DECREE BY DEFAULT MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU FOR THE RELIEF ASKED IN THE COMPLAINT.

You have been sued. To participate in the case, you MUST file an official document with the court within the time stated on this Notice called an "Appearance" and a document called an "Answer/Response". The Answer/Response is not required in small claims or eviction cases unless ordered by the court. If you do not file an Appearance and Answer/Response on time, the court may decide the case without hearing from you, and you could be held in default and lose the case. After you fill out the necessary documents, you need to electronically file (e-file) them with the court.

To e-file, you must create an account with an e-filing service provider. For more information, go to ilcourts.info/efiling. If you cannot e-file, you can get an exemption that allows you to file in-person or by mail. You may be charged filing fees, but if you cannot pay them, you can file an Application for Waiver of Court Fees. It is possible that the court will allow you to attend the first court date in this case in-person or remotely by video or phone. Contact the Circuit Court Clerk's office or visit the Court's website to find out whether this is possible and, if so, how to do this. Need help? Call or text Illinois Court Help at 833-411-1121 or go to ilcourthelp.gov for information about going to court, including how to fill out and file documents. You can also get free legal information and legal referrals at illinoislegalaid.org. All documents referred to in this Notice can be found at ilcourts.info/forms. Other documents may be available from your local Circuit Court Clerk's office or website. ¿Necesita ayuda? Llame o envíe un mensaje de texto a Illinois Court Help al 833-411- 1121, o visite ilcourthelp.gov para obtener información sobre los casos de la corte y cómo completar y presentar formularios.

PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT, THE PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLC Attorney for Plaintiff 1 N. Dearborn St. Suite 1200 Chicago, IL 60602 Ph. (312) 346-9088 File No. 23-15624IL-944680 I3227482

(Published in The Shopper's Guide Aug. 23, 30 & Sept. 6, 2023) 442533

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE 15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT STEPHENSON COUNTY - FREEPORT, ILLINOIS Mortgage Assets

Management, LLC f/k/a Reverse Mortgage Solutions, Inc. PLAINTIFF Vs. Judith Eikstadt; et. al. DEFENDANTS

No. 2022FC73 NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on 03/21/2023, the Sheriff of Stephenson County, Illinois will on September 21, 2023 at the hour of 9:30 AM at Stephenson County Courthouse 15 North Galena Avenue 1st Floor, West door of courthouse Freeport, IL 61032, or in a place otherwise designated at the time of sale, County of Stephenson and State of Illinois, sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, as set forth below, the following described real estate:

LOTS 160 AND 161 OF SAXBY HEIGHTS ADDITION TO THE CITY OF FREEPORT, ILLINOIS, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED AUGUST 16, 1910, IN BOOK C OF PLATS ON PAGE 47; SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF STEPHENSON AND STATE OF ILLINOIS

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Sale terms: 10% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the auction; The balance, including the Judicial sale fee for Abandoned Residential Property Municipality Relief Fund, which is calculated at the rate of \$1 for each \$1,000 or fraction thereof of the amount paid by the purchaser not to exceed \$300, in certified funds, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. The subject property is subject to general real estate taxes, special assessments, or special taxes levied against said real estate and is offered for sale without any representation as to quality or quantity of title and without recourse to Plaintiff and in "AS IS" condition. The sale is further subject to confirmation by

the court. If the property is a condominium and the foreclosure takes place after 1/1/2007, purchasers other than the mortgagees will be required to pay any assessment and legal fees due under The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(1) and (g)(4).

If the property is located in a common interest community, purchasers other than mortgagees will be required to pay any assessment and legal fees due under the Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1).

If the sale is set aside for any reason, the Purchaser at the sale shall be entitled only to a return of the deposit paid. The Purchaser shall have no further recourse against the Mortgageor, the Mortgagee or the Mortgagee's attorney.

Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser shall receive a Certificate of Sale, which will entitle the purchaser to a Deed to the real estate after Confirmation of the sale. The successful purchaser has the sole responsibility/expense of evicting any tenants or other individuals presently in possession of the subject premises.

The property will NOT be open for inspection and Plaintiff makes no representation as to the condition of the property. Prospective bidders are admonished to check the Court file to verify all information.

IF YOU ARE THE MORTGAGOR (HOMEOWNER), YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN IN POSSESSION FOR 30 DAYS AFTER ENTRY OF AN ORDER OF POSSESSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 15-1701(C) OF THE ILLINOIS MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE LAW.

For information: Examine the court file or contact Plaintiff's attorney: Codilis & Associates, P.C., 15W030 North Frontage Road, Suite 100, Burr Ridge, IL 60527, (630) 794-9876. Please refer to file number 14-22-08449. I3227254

(Published in The Shopper's Guide Aug. 23, 30, Sept. 9, 2023) 442384

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE 15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT STEPHENSON COUNTY - FREEPORT, ILLINOIS Illinois Housing Development Authority PLAINTIFF

Vs. Nichole Jones; Unknown Owners and Nonrecord Claimants DEFENDANTS

No. 2023FC33

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION NOTICE IS GIVEN TO YOU:

Nichole Jones Unknown Owners and Non-record Claimants

That this case has been commenced in this Court against you and other defendants, praying for the foreclosure of a certain Mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to-wit:

COMMONLY KNOWN AS: 1418 South Walnut Avenue Freeport, IL 61032 and which said Mortgage was made by:

Nichole Jones the Mortgageor(s), to Midwest Community Bank, as Mortgagee, and recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds of Stephenson County, Illinois, as Document No. 200700083352 Book 133 Page 1905; and for other relief; that summons was duly issued out of said Court against you as provided by law and that the said suit is now pending.

NOW, THEREFORE, UNLESS YOU file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case in the Office of the Clerk of this Court, Shanelle Bardell Clerk of the Circuit Court 15 North Galena Freeport, IL 61032

on or before September 22, 2023, A DEFAULT MAY BE ENTERED AGAINST YOU AT ANY TIME AFTER THAT DAY AND A JUDGMENT MAY BE ENTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRAYER OF SAID COMPLAINT.

CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C. Attorneys for Plaintiff 15W030 North Frontage Road, Suite 100 Burr Ridge, IL 60527 (630) 794-5300 DuPage # 15170 Winnebago # 531 Our File No. 14-23-03758

IN*CI*DENTAL*LY

Current federal dental legislation

A few weeks ago, I wrote about the work of the Dental Corps during the various wars. Realizing the impact of poor oral and overall health on our service members military readiness, the armed services have established dental and medical deployable requirements. Unfortunately, 130,000 service and National Guard members have been identified as lacking any type of medical or dental insurance. Deployment requirements also have an impact on recruitment for people who do not have insurance, nor



By **DR. STEPHEN PETRAS**
Illinois Licensed
General Dentist

the means to pay for the necessary dental or medical care needed to meet the eligibility requirements. As national security rests on our ability to deploy our troops at a moment's notice, members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committee are working to pass the

Dental Care for Our Troops Act in the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act.

Another federal bill that has been put forward seeks to address the lack of adequate medical and dental care in our rural communities. Passage of the Rural Health Workforce Pathway Act would see the Health Resources and Service Administration distribute grants to either establish, improve, or expand health career education, including guidance, mentoring and assistance in enrolling and succeeding in various health

training programs in rural elementary and secondary schools. Studies have shown that early exposure to professional healthcare career opportunities results in a greater number of rural students choosing to pursue a health care career. Rural students are also more likely to choose to practice in a rural environment.

In a previous column I discussed how the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is responsible for approximately 70% of oropharyngeal cancers in the United States. In addition to head and neck

cancers, HPV is linked to cervical and vulvar cancers in women, penis cancer in men and anal cancer in both men and women. As it has been shown that the earlier someone receives the HPV vaccine, the better it works to prevent these cancers, the American Dental Association is grateful that their efforts to protect the population through HPV vaccine education will find further support as federal legislation has established the PREVENT HPV CANCERS Act. This will support HPV vaccine education in all

healthcare settings.

I also wanted to update you on the Illinois State Dental Society's (ISDS) efforts to address dental insurance reform. As I reported in a column earlier this year, states across the nation have been pursuing legislation that would require dental insurance companies to spend at least 80% of premium dollars collected on patient care. As I reported, Massachusetts voters overwhelmingly supported legislation that now requires

See LEGISLATION, Page 19

LEGAL NOTICES

Continued from previous page
NOTE: This law firm is a debt collector.
I3227637

(Published in
The Shopper's Guide
Aug. 23, 30 & Sept. 6, 2023)
442700

**IN THE CIRCUIT
COURT OF THE 15TH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
JO DAVIESS COUNTY -
GALENA, ILLINOIS**
Dupaco Community Credit
Union
PLAINTIFF
Vs.

Dana L. France; Diana
L. France; Apple Canyon
Lake Property Owners'
Association; Unknown
Owners and Nonrecord
Claimants

DEFENDANTS
No. 2023FC3
**NOTICE BY
PUBLICATION
NOTICE IS GIVEN TO
YOU:**

Diana L. France
Unknown Owners and
Nonrecord Claimants
That this case has been
commenced in this Court
against you and other de-
fendants, praying for the
foreclosure of a certain
Mortgage conveying the
premises described as fol-
lows, to-wit:

**COMMONLY KNOWN
AS:**
4A154 E Apple
Canyon Rd
Apple River, IL 61001

and which said Mortgage
was made by:
Dana L. France
the Mortgagor(s), to Dupa-
co Community Credit
Union, as Mortgagee, and
recorded in the Office of
the Recorder of Deeds of
Jo Daviess County, Illinois,
as Document No. 389684

modified with 399033; and
for other relief; that sum-
mons was duly issued out
of said Court against you
as provided by law and that
the said suit is now pend-
ing.

NOW, THEREFORE,
UNLESS YOU file your
answer or otherwise file
your appearance in this
case in the Office of the
Clerk of this Court,
Kathy Phillips
Clerk of the Circuit Court
Jo Daviess County
Courthouse
330 N. Bench Street
Galena, IL 61036
on or before September 22,
2023, A DEFAULT MAY
BE ENTERED AGAINST
YOU AT ANY TIME AF-
TER THAT DAY AND
A JUDGMENT MAY
BE ENTERED IN AC-
CORDANCE WITH THE
PRAYER OF SAID COM-
PLAINT.

CODILIS &
ASSOCIATES, P.C.
Attorneys for Plaintiff
15W030 North Frontage
Road, Suite 100
Burr Ridge, IL 60527
(630) 794-5300
DuPage # 15170
Winnebago # 531
Our File No. 14-23-00825

NOTE: This law firm is a
debt collector.
I3227635

(Published in
The Scoop Today
Aug. 23, 30 & Sept. 6, 2023)
442702

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC
SALE**

The following self-storage
Cube contents contain-
ing Household and other
goods will be sold for cash
by CubeSmart to satisfy a
lien on September 14th,
2023 at www.storagearea-

sure.com. Online Bids
start 14 days prior to the fi-
nal sale date listed above at
the store and approximate
times listed below:

**Online Bids END Approx:
1:00 P.M. at CubeSmart
#4409, 555 W. South St.,
Freeport, IL 61032, (779)
677-2500.**

Cube 1478 Tiffany Vicaro;
Cube 1020 April Baxa
(Published in
The Shopper's Guide
Aug. 30 and Sept. 6, 2023)
442856

Estate Notice

Notice is given to creditors
of the death of:
Helen M. Deckler
3359 W. Stephenson St.
Rd.
Freeport, IL 61032
Claims against the Estate
must be filed in the office
of the clerk of the court at
Stephenson County Court-
house, Freeport, IL. before
December 22, 2023. Any
claim not filed on or before
that date is barred.
Dated: August 25, 2023
Mark G. Deckler - Exec-
utor

(Published in
The Shopper's Guide
Aug. 30 and Sept. 6 & 13,
2023)
443078

**NOTICE OF SPECIAL
MEETINGS OF
POLICYHOLDERS TO
VOTE ON PROPOSED
MERGER**

**TO THE POLICY-
HOLDERS OF WEST
POINT MUTUAL IN-
SURANCE COMPANY
AND FRONTIER-MT
CARROLL MUTUAL
INSURANCE COMPA-
NY**

Notice is hereby given
that at a special meeting
of the Board of Directors
of **West Point Mutu-
al Insurance Company**
("West Point Mutual")
held on August 16, 2023,
and at a regular meeting
of the Board of Directors
of **Frontier-Mt Carroll
Mutual Insurance Com-
pany** ("Frontier-Mt Carroll
Mutual") held on August
2, 2023, it was determined
by each said Board that
a merger of West Point
Mutual, an Illinois farm
mutual insurance compa-
ny of Lena, Illinois, and
Frontier-Mt Carroll Mu-
tual, an Illinois domestic
mutual insurance compa-
ny of Mt Carroll, Illinois,
is desirable, and the said
Boards further determined
to submit to a vote of poli-
cyholders of each company
the question of such merg-
er in accordance with the
terms approved and recom-
mended by the Boards, the
Board of West Point Mutu-
al by resolution authoriz-
ing the President to call a
special meeting of the poli-
cyholders of the company
which will be held on the
23rd day of October, 2023
at the hour of 7:00 p.m. at
West Point Mutual's office,
240 W. Main Street, Lena,
Illinois, and the Board of
Frontier-Mt Carroll Mutual
authorizing the President
to call a special meeting
of the policyholders of the
company which will be
held on the 23rd day of Oc-
tober, 2023, at the hour of
2:00 p.m. at 312 N. Main
Street, Mt Carroll, Illinois,
to consider and vote on the
proposed terms of merger
approved and recommend-
ed by the Boards as afore-
said and further to consider

and act on any and all mat-
ters that may be brought
before said meetings.

THEREFORE, pursuant
to such actions and orders,
notice is hereby given of
such special meetings of
policyholders to be held at
the times and places afore-
said to consider and vote
on the question of merger
of said companies and the
terms thereof. A Summary
of the Proposed Agreement
and Plan of Merger is as
follows:

Under the terms of the
proposed Agreement and
Plan of Merger between
West Point Mutual In-
surance Company and
Frontier-Mt Carroll Mu-
tual Insurance Company,
the former company will
merge with and into the
latter company, which
shall be the surviving
company, the Agreement
and Plan of Merger fur-
ther providing for transfer
by the former company to
the latter company and
acceptance by the latter
company of all policies
and contracts of insur-
ance issued by the former
and all assets and books
and records and contracts
of the former, for the as-
sumption by the latter of
all liabilities of the for-
mer, for the protection
of rights of creditors and
policyholders by the in-
clusion of a provision that
such rights shall not be
impaired by such merger,
for the retention by any
policyholder of the for-
mer company of rights
under Section 168 of the
Illinois Insurance Code,
for the effectiveness of
the Agreement only af-
ter approval thereof by
the Board of Directors

of each company, said
approval having been
given by the Board of
Directors of West Point
County Mutual Insurance
Company at a special
meeting of the Board of
Directors held August 16,
2023, and by the Board of
Directors of Frontier-Mt
Carroll Illinois Mutual
Insurance Company at
a regular meeting of the
Board of Directors held
on August 2, 2023, and
only after the approval of
the policyholders of the
former company and the
policyholders of the latter
company and the Director
of Insurance of the State
of Illinois, and for such
other provisions as are
appropriate to the effectua-
tion of said merger.

Said vote on the merger
of said companies and the
terms thereof may, at the
election of any policyhold-
er not represented in per-
son at the aforesaid special
meetings of policyholders,
be effected by proxy, in
due form submitted by said
policyholder and subject to
proof of authenticity by the
company.

Dated this 1st day of Sep-
tember, 2023.

**West Point Mutual
Insurance Company**
By: /s/ Alan Wenzel,
President

**Frontier-Mt Carroll
Mutual Insurance
Company**
By: /s/Brian Woessner,
President

(Published in
The Shopper's Guide
Sept. 6, 13 & 20, 2023)

FROM LENA'S KITCHEN



The not so skinny cook

Labor Day has ended the summer unofficially. Remember the old saying of not being able to wear white after Labor Day? I know that dates me. There are probably other things we aren't supposed to be doing, but the weather is heating up once again, so fall seems as if it is very far away. This week we have some good salads, a great sandwich, and yummy desserts. Have a good week cooking.

Corn Salad

If you still have some fresh corn, this salad is one you might want to try. It has just a little zip to it with the cilantro and red pepper. The avocados give it just the right taste for an end of the summer salad.

- 8 ears fresh corn
- 1 1/2 T. olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 C. cooked black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 C. chopped cilantro
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 1 1/2 large avocados, pitted, peeled, and diced
- 1/2 C. red onion, diced
- 1/2 C. feta or Queso fresco cheese

Dressing:

- 1 t. honey
- 1 T. lime juice
- 1/2 t. chili powder
- 1/4 t. cumin
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1/4 C. mayonnaise
- Cut corn kernels from

cobs. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat; add corn. Cook, stirring frequently, until lightly charred, 10 to 15 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. In a medium bowl, combine corn mixture, beans, 1/2 C. cilantro, and 1/2 C. cheese. Toss gently until evenly combined.

Dressing: In a bowl, whisk together dressing ingredients; pour over salad. Gently toss until coated. Garnish with cheese and cilantro leaves.

Spinach Almond Salad

This salad is a different take on spinach. The ginger salad dressing can be bought in many grocery stores, or you can make your own.

- 1 pkg. (6 oz.) baby spinach
- 2 C. cooked pork
- 1 C. bean sprouts

2 medium carrots, thinly sliced

- 1/2 C. sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 C. sliced almonds, toasted

Ginger Salad Dressing

- 1/2 C. extra virgin olive oil
- 2 T. apple cider vinegar
- 2 T. Dijon mustard
- 1 T. honey
- 2 t. finely grated ginger
- 1/2 t. sea salt
- 1/4 t. pepper

In a large bowl, combine the first 6 ingredients. Dressing: In a jar or small bowl, whisk together all ingredients until fully blended. If needed, put in microwave for 40 seconds and shake again. Pour over salad.

Chicken Parmesan Slider Bake

Sliders seem to be the rage to eat now. These are made with the breaded chicken tenders, so they are easy from the beginning. These are great for Sunday football get togethers.

24 oz. frozen breaded chicken tenders

- 1 pkg. (12 oz.) Hawaiian sweet rolls
- 14 slices provolone cheese, divided
- 1 jar (24 oz.) marinara sauce

Topping

- 1/2 C. butter, cubed
- 1 t. garlic powder
- 1 t. crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/4 C. grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 T. minced fresh basil

Preheat oven to 375. Prepare chicken tenders according to package directions. Without separating rolls, cut horizontally in half; arrange all bottoms in a greased 9 x 13 baking dish. Place 8 cheese slices over roll bottoms, overlapping as needed. Bake until

cheese is melted, 3 to 5 minutes. Layer rolls with half of the sauce, chicken tenders, remaining sauce, and remaining cheese slices.

Topping: Microwave butter, garlic powder and red pepper flakes covered, on high, stirring occasionally, until butter is melted. Pour over rolls, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake, uncovered, until golden brown and heated through, 20 to 25 minutes. Sprinkle with basil before serving.

Eggplant Casserole

This time of the year I usually get a request for an eggplant recipe. This one has rice and cheese. You can substitute sesame seeds for pine nuts if you find pine nuts too expensive. Remember to keep nuts in the freezer until you use them. Prego makes a good tomato/basil pasta sauce.

- 1 1/2 C. cooked rice
- 1 C. shredded Italian cheese blend
- 1/3 C. chopped fresh basil
- 1 egg
- 1/4 t. pepper
- 1 1/2 lbs. eggplant, trimmed, cut into 24 round slices, 1/2 inch thick
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1 1/2 C. tomato and basil pasta sauce from 24 oz. jar
- 1/3 C. crumbled feta
- 2 T. pine nuts

Heat oven to 400. In a medium bowl, combine rice, shredded cheese, chopped basil, egg and pepper; stir until evenly combined. Cover and reserve. Heat skillet over medium heat. Coat eggplant slices with cooking spray; sprinkle both sides with salt. In batches, cook eggplant, flipping once until softened, 3 to 4 minutes per side. In a 9 x 13 baking dish sprayed with cooking spray, spread 3/4

C. pasta sauce. Place 12 eggplant slices in dish. Divide rice mixture evenly among slices. Top with remaining eggplant slices and spread with remaining sauce. Coat sheet of foil with cooking spray. Cover baking dish with foil, coated side down. Bake until hot, about 20 minutes. Uncover and top with feta cheese and pine nuts; bake 5 minutes. Top with additional basil leaves if desired.

Caramel Apple Pie Bars

These bars require a little time and effort, but they are definitely worth it. The apples are just starting to come in, so it is a perfect time to make this great dessert. You can substitute Honeycrisp or Braeburn apples for the Golden Delicious if you can't find them.

- 1/4 C. unsalted butter
- 6 C. Golden Delicious apple (about 4)
- 1/2 C. water
- 2 1/2 T. cornstarch
- 2 1/4 C. firmly packed brown sugar, divided
- 1 t. apple pie spice
- 3 1/2 C. flour
- 1 C. old-fashioned oats
- 3/4 C. finely chopped pecans
- 1 t. baking powder
- 1 t. salt
- 1 1/2 C. unsalted butter, melted

2 pkg (8 oz. each) cream cheese, softened

1/2 C. sugar

1 t. vanilla

2 eggs, room temperature

Caramel topping

In a large skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add apples; cook, stirring frequently, until almost tender, 3 to 4 minutes. In a small bowl, whisk together 1/2 C. water and cornstarch. Pour over apples.

See KITCHEN, Page 17

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You ought to be in pictures!

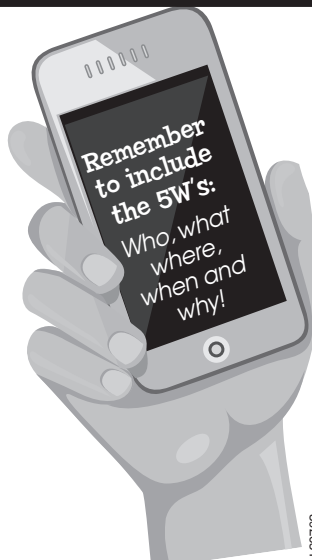
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•Kitchen (Continued from page 16)

Add ½ C. brown sugar and pie spice. Bring to a boil and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Remove from heat and let cool completely.

Preheat the oven to 350. Line a 9 x 13 baking pan with foil, letting excess extend over sides of pan. Spray with baking spray with flour. In a large bowl, stir together flour, oats, pecans, baking powder, salt and remaining 1 ¾ C. brown sugar. Drizzle with melted butter; toss with a fork until moistened and crumbly. Reserve 2 C. packed flour mixture in a small bowl and refrigerate until ready to use. Press remaining flour mixture into bottom of prepared pan. Bake until edges are just lightly browned, 12 to 15 minutes. Let cool completely on a wire rack. Leave oven on.

Beat cream cheese in the bowl of a stand mixer with the paddle attachment at medium speed until smooth. Add sugar and vanilla and beat until creamy. With mixer on low speed, add eggs, one at a time, beating just until combined after each addition. Pour cream cheese mixture over cooled crust, spreading into an even layer. Pour apple mixture over cream cheese layer. Crumble reserved 2 C. flour mixture on top. Bake until top is golden brown and mixture is set around edges and jiggles slightly in center and an instant read thermometer inserted in center registers 155, about 30 minutes. Let cool completely on a wire rack. Refrigerate until thoroughly chilled, about 8 hours or up to overnight. Using excess foil as handles, remove from pan. Gently peel foil from sides. Cut into bars and drizzle with caramel.

Layered Lemon Dessert Squares

These bars are easy and taste like lemon pie. I love lemon

curd, and you can usually find it in the jelly and jam section of the grocery store.

¾ C. graham cracker crumbs
 1¼ C. sugar, divided
 1 T. cinnamon
 1 ¼ C. butter, melted
 2 pkg. (8 oz. each) cream cheese softened
 2 C. heavy whipping cream
 1 t. lemon extract
 2 jars (10 oz. each) lemon curd or 1 can (15¾ oz.) lemon pie filling

In a large bowl, mix cracker crumbs, ¾ C. sugar and cinnamon; stir in butter. Reserve half of mixture for topping. Press remaining crumb mixture onto bottom of a greased 9 x 13 baking dish. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese and remaining sugar until smooth. Gradually beat in cream and extract until soft peaks form. Spread half of the cream cheese mixture over crust. Gently spread lemon curd over cream cheese layer. Spread with remaining cream cheese mixture. Sprinkle with reserved cracker crumb mixture. Refrigerate, covered, overnight. Cut into squares to serve.

Final Thoughts

One of my friends made the pineapple pie recipe and brought me a piece. It was refreshing and tasty. I always like to hear when readers have a good experience with recipes. Next week is the Fall Festival. We are hoping for good weather. We haven't had much rain, and I really don't wish for rain on our parade or on Friday or Saturday night. The town is getting spruced up; most of the trees have been trimmed or removed from the storm. I had one planted in my backyard; I figure when you lose three, you better at least replace those three with one. I know at my age I won't see it grow very tall, but it is nice and straight in

the backyard. I can see it from my window as I watch television.

The gazebo on Main Street is taking shape. It looks great and will be used, I am sure. Football, volleyball, and golf continue. I am watching baseball and trying not to get too frustrated with the Cubs. Frustration is one of the endearing emotions of a Cub fan, as we have had a lot of practice with hoping.

I mentioned last week that we continue to see fruits and vegetables of the season coming in as bumper crops. Zucchini and summer squash are still producing by the bushel baskets. Fall squash and apples are beginning to appear. There are good eats out there, and we better enjoy them while we can. Send any recipes for the great fruits and vegetables of the season. If you have some recipes you would like to share, you can contact us in person, by mail at From Lena's Kitchens, *The Shopper's Guide* at 240 W. Main St. or email us at scoopshopper@rvpublishing.com.

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Lena-Winslow School District has an opening for a **Van Driver** for the 2023-2024 school year. A CDL is not required, but a bus passenger permit is, for the Van Driver position. AM and PM routes which would be approximately 3 to 4 hours a day. There is the potential for more hours. Route drivers are also needed.

If interested, please contact
Duane Reed, Transportation Director,
at 815-668-0805 or
email him at reedd@le-win.net

Applications accepted until positions are filled.

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443009

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real estate

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Prisoners (Continued from page 5)

used wheelchairs, or had terminal diseases like end-stage liver disease; and at least three died in prison, records show.

There are other frail and disabled prisoners who don't see a doctor on a regular basis, "so there's no way for the doctors to know about their condition," Soble said.

Michael Merritt knows the limitations of the prison health care system all too well. His brother Phillip Merritt hasn't received proper medical treatment in prison for years, he said, and he's afraid of what could happen as his brother's dementia worsens. He wishes the state would let his brother die at home, where his family can take turns caring for him, instead of a prison cell, where he's unsure whether there's anyone to properly look after him. "I don't know what the problem is," Merritt said. "They know they can't take care of him in there the way he is supposed to be taken care of."

Medical release decisions dictated by politics

The Prisoner Review Board never told Merritt why they denied his brother's medical release request. Their deliberations happen behind closed doors, and the law doesn't require them to provide an explanation. Board chair Shelton said members weigh many factors when voting on medical release requests, but they primarily focus on an applicant's prior convictions, where they plan to live once they're released, and testimonies from the victims of their crimes.

An analysis of the board's decisions shows there's likely another factor at play: politics.

Under state law, the board is required to be roughly evenly split between Democrats and Republicans. The 12 current members include former law enforcement officials, educators, attorneys, and counselors. Pritzker appoints all board members, who are then confirmed by the state Senate.

Medical release requests are decided by panels of three

board members; at least two must agree to either approve or deny a request. Shelton said board members are "chosen randomly" for the panels.

But so far, Republicans have cast more votes in medical release cases than Democrats—and they are much more likely to vote to deny those requests, an analysis of voting data shows.

Three out of the four board members with the highest denial rates—Jared Bohland, Kenneth Tupy, and LeAnn Miller—are Republicans. Each of them voted to deny release in more than 70% of the cases they heard, and each voted on more than a third of all medical release requests, voting data shows. Bohland and Tupy, along with Democrat Matthew Coates, were on the panel that denied Phillip Merritt's medical release request in July. They voted to deny six out of seven requests that day, records show.

A month earlier, Bohland was part of another panel, this time with two other Democrats, when they heard the case of 82-year-old Saul Colbert. Like Merritt, Colbert developed dementia while serving time for armed robbery. They both also had previous violent convictions, records show; Merritt had a conviction for attempted murder, while Colbert was convicted of murder. Both had family ready to take them in, and both were represented by the same attorney with the Illinois Prison Project. But the board voted 2-1 to release Colbert, with Bohland voting against.

"The only difference between those cases was the panel," Soble said.

Through a spokesperson, Bohland, Tupy, and Miller declined to answer questions about their voting records. Lisa Daniels, a former board member and a restorative justice practitioner, said she believes some of her former colleagues are ideologically against letting anyone out of prison early. They "simply believe that a person should complete the entirety of their sentence, no matter the circumstances they present in their petition, no matter how

that person may have shown themselves to be redeemed, and no matter (if they're) no longer a threat to public safety," Daniels said. Daniels resigned from the board in January, one of six Democrats to step down or fail to be appointed since 2021. In the past few years, the state GOP has turned the board into a new front in the ongoing debate over criminal justice reform.

Democrats, who have a supermajority in the state Senate, have failed to muster enough support among their ranks to get Pritzker's appointments through, leaving the board with three vacant seats.

Pritzker declined an interview request.

In a statement, he acknowledged his administration has had a hard time recruiting potential board members because of the frayed political atmosphere around its work. "In today's political climate where supporting common-sense criminal justice reform has become a lightning rod, the Coleman Act's initial success should be seen as major progress in the right direction," he said. Coleman Act has 'failed to live up to its promise'

The day Pritzker signed the Coleman Act, its main sponsor, state Rep. Will Guzzardi,

D-Chicago, said in a press release the law would transform Illinois' prison system and allow families to properly say goodbye to their loved ones.

"I'm sorry we couldn't afford this mercy to Joe Coleman, but I'm proud that we'll be able to do so for hundreds of other Illinoisans," Guzzardi said. Criminal justice reformers celebrated the Coleman Act as a model for other states to follow. In a report last year, FAIMM, a prominent national advocacy group, said the Coleman Act was one of the strongest "compassionate release" laws in the country.

But so far, the act has "failed to live up to its promise," said Mary Price, FAIMM's general counsel and the report's author.

Advocates want lawmakers to institute several changes to the Coleman Act to encourage the Prisoner Review Board to release more people.

Lawmakers should require board members to visit prison infirmaries to see firsthand the state of prison health care, advocates said. The board should also receive more training on how to evaluate the medical conditions of prisoners applying for release. Advocates also want the state to provide prisoners who are applying for medical release with an attorney to ar-

gue their case. Guzzardi said he'll advocate for funding for that in the upcoming fall legislative session.

Lawmakers should also allow prisoners to reapply for medical release sooner than currently allowed, said William Nissen, an attorney who represents prisoners pro bono, including on medical release requests. Prisoners denied medical release currently have to wait six months before they can reapply, unless they get a special exemption from the board. Shelton has only approved three out of 10 requests so far, according to figures provided by the board's chief legal counsel. "If you're representing a terminally ill person, then a large part of their remaining life is gone before you can even apply again," Nissen said.

Nissen said lawmakers should also require the board to explain why they denied a medical release to "instill a certain amount of discipline in the decision-making process." If board members have to articulate their reason for denying someone release, maybe they'll reconsider the decision, he said.

Phillip Merritt's attorney is in the process of refiling his medical release request. His brother Michael doesn't know whether he'll get out this time. And he hasn't been able to reach Phillip in three weeks—the cellmate who had helped facilitate the calls was apparently transferred. But he's certain he and his family can give Phillip a more humane send-off than any prison could. "At least he could go peacefully," he said.

REAL ESTATE NOTICES

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE 15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT STEPHENSON COUNTY - FREEPORT, ILLINOIS Mortgage Assets Management, LLC f/k/a Reverse Mortgage Solutions, Inc. PLAINTIFF Vs. Judith Eikstadt; et. al. DEFENDANTS

No. 2022FC73 NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on 03/21/2023, the Sheriff of Stephenson County, Illinois will on September 21, 2023 at the hour of 9:30 AM at Stephenson County Courthouse 15 North Galena Avenue 1st Floor, West door of courthouse Freeport, IL 61032, or in a place otherwise designated at the time of sale, County of Stephenson and State of Illinois, sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, as set forth below, the following described real estate:

PIN 18-13-36-310-010 Improved with Single Family Home COMMONLY KNOWN AS: 1331 W Logan Street Freeport, IL 61032

Sale terms: 10% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the auction; The balance, including the Judicial sale fee for Abandoned Residential Property Municipality Relief Fund, which is calculated at the rate of \$1 for each \$1,000 or fraction thereof of the amount paid by the purchaser not to exceed \$300, in certified funds, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. The subject property is subject to general real estate taxes, special assessments, or special taxes levied against said real estate and is offered for sale without any representation as to quality or quantity of title and without recourse to Plaintiff and in "AS IS" condition. The sale is further subject to confirmation by the court. If the property is a condominium

and the foreclosure takes place after 1/1/2007, purchasers other than the mortgagees will be required to pay any assessment and legal fees due under The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(1) and (g)(4).

If the property is located in a common interest community, purchasers other than mortgagees will be required to pay any assessment and legal fees due under the Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1).

If the sale is set aside for any reason, the Purchaser at the sale shall be entitled only to a return of the deposit paid. The Purchaser shall have no further recourse against the Mortgagee, the Mortgagee or the Mortgagee's attorney.

Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser shall receive a Certificate of Sale, which will entitle the purchaser to a Deed to the real estate after Confirmation of the sale. The successful purchaser has the sole responsibility/expense of evicting any tenants or other individuals presently in possession of the subject premises.

The property will NOT be open for inspection and Plaintiff makes no representation as to the condition of the property. Prospective bidders are admonished to check the Court file to verify all information.

IF YOU ARE THE MORTGAGEE OR (HOMEOWNER), YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN IN POSSESSION FOR 30 DAYS AFTER ENTRY OF AN ORDER OF POSSESSION. IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 15-1701(C) OF THE ILLINOIS MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE LAW.

For information: Examine the court file or contact Plaintiff's attorney: Codilis & Associates, P.C., 15W030 North Frontage Road, Suite 100, Burr Ridge, IL 60527, (630) 794-9876. Please refer to file number 14-22-08449. I3227254

(Published in The Shopper's Guide Aug. 23, 30 & Sept. 6, 2023) 4423385

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Legislation (Continued from page 15)

dental insurance plans in their state to pay out at least 83% of their premium dollars on patient care. Due to extensive opposition from the insurance industry, this bill did not get passed during the current Illinois legislative session. The ISDS is resolute in their determination to advocate for dental patients in this matter. I will update you on their progress in the next legislative session. In the meantime, please feel free

to share your support on the need for dental insurance reform with your state senators and representatives.



Blackhawks (Continued from front page)

himself as he caught the two-point conversion, putting Stockton up 16-0.

The Blackhawks' run game proved to be too much for the Heyworth defense. Stockton knifed their way down the field rather quickly. Just one minute into the second quarter, the Blackhawks established a three-score lead as Mark Detwiler plunged into the endzone from two-yards out.

The Stockton defense was

quietly the star of the show for the Blackhawks. While Stockton's running backs put on the big plays, the defense was busy getting the ball back into the hands of their offense. Midway through the second quarter, Gile took advantage of the added opportunities as he busted a 56-yard run, putting Stockton up 31-0.

Finally, the run game opened up some passing lanes as Colby Tucker con-

nected with Brady Haas on a 38-yard passing score. Stockton's scoring came to an end in the first half when Hubb punched in his second touchdown of the day. With 47 points before the half-time break, the Blackhawks went to work on the clock in the second. Altogether the Blackhawks put up 270 yards on the ground. Hubb led the way with 79 yards, while Gile rushed for 70 and Logan Breed rushed for 66. Tucker

rushed for 33 yards himself. Tucker was solid in the air as he completed eight of his 10 passes for 128 yards and two touchdowns. Tucker even got involved defensively, snagging an interception on the

day. Detwiler led the way defensively, racking up 10 total tackles, including two tackles for loss and a sack.

The Blackhawks have one of the toughest challenges of Downey's young

career ahead of them. This Friday, Sept. 8 Stockton hits the road to face off with the Lena-Winslow Panthers. Le-Win is off to a 2-0 start after capturing the 1A Illinois State Championship last season.




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Students spreading joy

Warren students in Mr. Zink's morning sixth grade social studies class recently took time to complete a Good Turn Friday project to help brighten the day of a member of the Warrior school family. Class members made get-well cards for district custodian, Roger Ackerson.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing



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