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YOUR FREE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2024

269 graduates complete programs at Highland Community College

With 269 Highland Community students completing their degrees and certificates, 172 graduates participated in the 61st annual Commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 18. Warm, summer-like temperatures added to the smiles of the graduates as they posed for pictures before the ceremony, and had a spring in their step as they crossed the stage to receive their diplomas from Board Chair Jim Endress and President Chris Kuberski outdoors on the Highland campus, in the courtyard between the Marvin-Burt Liberal Arts Center and Natural Science Center. Commencement Speaker Marjorie Phillips, 2021 Delbert Scheider Legacy Award Recipient, delivered a speech full of accolades for the graduates, delivering words of wisdom from a woman who has been a great contributor and supporter of Community College Education. Phillips wished the graduates well, telling them the world awaits their greatness. "Highland has provided you the resources you need to succeed," Phillips told the graduates. "Never be willing to say I can't. Always be willing to try. It has been a joy to share this day with you. Highland is a shining light of learning."

The student Speaker was Marie-Louise de Jong of the Netherlands, who spoke of her experience of making lifelong friendships while attending Highland. "Highland is filled with diversity, and the connections we made here with students from all over is spe-



cial," de Jong said. "The unity at Highland is there for every one of us. Highland is class. We have class and that class has brought us to this day."

Four graduates who received their degrees on Saturday spoke

before the ceremony to share their experience of getting a quality education at Highland, thus shaping their path to future endeavors.

See GRADUATES, Page 3

Postal Customer **ecrws

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Highland Community College students Allison Coon, Trace Williamson, Kaitlyn Meyerhofer, and Madilyn Diddens celebrate graduation and the completion of their programs.

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Obituaries

LEONA BLOCK

Leona M. Block, 99, of Chicago, formerly a long-time resident of Lena, passed away peacefully on Friday, May 17, 2024. She resided at Brookdale Lake Shore Drive for the past 13 years.

She was born November 22, 1924, at St. Francis Hospital in Freeport to Alfred Otto and Mabel Amelia (Krusey) Stukenberg. She spent her childhood on the family farm near Florence Station. She attended grade school there and participated in youth activities of the Florence Station Evangelical United Brethren Church. She graduated with the Freeport High School Class of 1942. Her favorite subjects were art and home economics. She was employed in administrative assistant and bookkeeping roles at Micro Switch and the State Bank of Freeport.

Leona married Carl Block, Jr., of Pearl City, in a sub-zero evening wedding, December 19, 1945, at the Florence Station Evangelical United Brethren Church. To arrive at their honeymoon destination, the Palmer House, they had to stand in the train car all the way from Rockford as it was filled with World War II veterans returning home for Christmas. Leona saved the receipt from the stay. In 2007, the hotel enabled Leona and



her daughter to replicate it for the original price in the penthouse, treasured by both.

Leona and Carl farmed near Pearl City after their marriage. She honed her love for cooking and baking, often having aromatic pies out of the oven by breakfast. She volunteered in her daughter's school activities, attended Pearl City Lions Club events with Carl, and was an active member of St. John's Lutheran Church. She served as church secretary, sang in the choir, and helped cook many suppers as a member of the Ladies Aid. She again was employed in administrative assistant positions at Micro Switch and Bankers Life and Casualty in Freeport.

In 1961, Carl changed careers to become an agent for Country Companies (now Country Financial). The family moved to Lena. Leona assisted Carl with administrative work. She started her active volunteer work then. She was a member for 61 years and served as an officer of Beta Sigma Phi Sorority - Delta Mu Chapter, a member of Good Shepherd Lutheran

Church for 63 years, serving as a lay liturgist until she was 86, and an active participant in the Hannah Circle, helping prepare numerous funeral lunches, as well as loving the children of the church. She also represented the circle in Church Women United.

She belonged to the Lena Women's Club and for many years solicited for the Lena Community Combined Fund. She also was a member of the Sewing Club, the Lena Community Card Club, and enjoyed playing social bridge with her foursome of Lena friends. Two of her most meaningful volunteer activities were tutoring third grade students in reading at the Lena Grade School and judging the Halloween children's costume contest. She helped Carl with the Lena Lions Fall Festival Pork Chop dinner and chaired the Women's Club Pie Stand at the event.

During this time, she became interested in china painting following in the footsteps of her mother-in-law's hobby. She was also known for her beautiful penmanship. Leona and Carl enjoyed attending Country Companies meetings in Chicago, often taking in a musical at the Schubert Theater while there. They enjoyed spending time with other Country agents and developed deep friendships. Similarly, they often traveled to district Lions Club events, which were special for them. The two of them traveled to Hawaii, Arizona, Canada, other southwest and northwest states. Leona made one fishing trip with the Block family to the remote area of Canada early in her life. Never again she said! She and Carl also enjoyed many winters in Vero Beach, FL with Lena friends.

Carl passed away April 17, 1992. Leona continued to live in Lena, participated in her many activities, and devel-

oped friendships with other widows, attending local concerts, plays, bazaars, dinners and holiday activities together. She and her daughter spent more time together in the Chicago area and traveling. Her only trip to Europe was in 2000 to Switzerland, which was a priority for her.

Leona is survived by her daughter, Pamela, of Chicago, and her sister, Lorraine Frautschy, of Freeport. Nieces and nephews who were very special to her, Judith (late Lloyd) Folkerts of Forreton, Jennifer (James) Laughlin of Columbia, SC, Jay Witte of St. Petersburg, FL, Thomas (Jeanie) Frautschy, College Grove, TN and Hilton Head, SC, Randolph (Ann) Block of East Moline, and Marsha Block of Freeport.

Preceding her in death were her husband, Carl, her parents, her in-laws, Carl and Marguerite Block, sisters, Ethel Haijenga and Jean Witte, brothers-in-law, C.F. Haijenga, Harold Witte, and Marshall Frautschy, brother-in-law and sister-in-law, K. Eugene and Marilynn Block, sister-in-law, Berniece Block, and nephew Michael Frautschy.

Cremation rites are to be accorded. A private graveside service will be held for family at the Lena Burial Park with the Reverend Thomas Mosbo officiating. A Celebration of Life Open House will be held for those whose lives were touched by Leona on Tuesday, June 11, 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., in the Fellowship Hall of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 118 E. Mason, Lena. In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Leona may be made to the Music Department c/o Highland Community College Foundation, 2998 W. Pearl City Road, Freeport, IL 61032. Condolences may be sent to the family at www. leamonfh.com.

MILDRED FARRINGER

Mildred Marie (Musser) Farringer went to be with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on May 22, 2024, at the age of 95. She had been eagerly looking forward to this day as she longed to see her Maker, and to also see her husband and eldest daughter again.

Mildred was born at home on Parker Rd., Stockton, IL and graduated from Lena High School in 1947. She married her high school sweetheart, R. Earl Farringer, on June 5, 1949, in the Church of the Brethren, Lena, IL, now the Beloved Church. She received her "cap" (CNA) in nurses training at the Deaconess Hospital, (Freeport Memorial Hospital). She also worked a short time at Furst-McNess before starting her family. Later, Mildred was employed for 25 years as a cook at the Lena-Winslow High School, retiring in 1991.

Mildred and her husband enjoyed many family get-togethers, worldwide traveling, including all 50 states and Canada, the Holy Land, Germany, Austria, Holland, Switzerland, England, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. She took up oil painting after retiring, with her family being the recipients of her many paintings throughout the years. In the 1980's she also spent many hours pursuing genealogy of both hers and her husband's families, with most of her resources coming from in-depth library research and speaking with people she met during their travels through the U.S. and Europe. She was very active in her church and held several positions, including that of deaconess and treasurer. She was also an avid reader, and crocheter, having made numerous baby blankets, and later lap robes for our servicemen and women. She also enjoyed putting puzzles together



but enjoyed time with her family the most.

Surviving are her son, Arthur (Cathy) Farringer, Burt, MI,

daughter, Angela (Wayne) Williams, Rockford, IL, daughter, Ava (Steve) Cascio, Freeport, IL, grandchildren: Jennifer (John) Amacher, Ted (Donielle) Freytag III, Ryan (Lisa) Freytag, Carrie Knoll, Carly (Reid) Guentner, and great-grandchildren: Jarod, Jacob, and Jace Amacher; Ted IV, James Freytag, Makayla (Brittan) DeVries and Natalie Sciotto; Zoey Freytag and Noah Ugalde; Brayden, Larkin, and Dustin Knoll; Kaelyn, Morgan and Reilyn Guentner, and many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents Carl R. and Mabel E. (Williams) Musser, father and mother-in-law Roy D. and Lula L. (Lutz) Farringer, husband R. Earl Farringer 10/14/2015, daughter Amanda "Amy" (Mark) Smith 12/16/2017, daughter-in-law Cathy Farringer 07/02/2023, brother Ora and sister-in-law Ellinor Musser, sister Florence and brother-in-law Raymond Steffes, and brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: Dean and Julia Farringer, Dwight and Helen Farringer, and Don and Katherine Fenn.

A private family burial will take place, followed by a memorial service which will be held on Wednesday, June 5, 2024, at 11 a.m. at Zion Church, 4292 Stephenson St. Rd., Freeport, IL. A luncheon will follow at noon in the fellowship hall. Memorial gifts will be donated to the Church's missionaries. Condolences may be sent to the family at www.leamonfh.com.

VIOLA NICKEL

Viola D. Nickel passed away May 21, 2024. She was 91 years young. The daughter of the late Alfred and Alice (Boelk) Schuld, she was born in Council Hill, IL on February 10, 1933, during the depression which ultimately gave her strong values, a strong work ethic, and the true



meaning of family. She had tremendous respect for God, and our Country.

Viola and her late husband Robert (Bob) worked together to build a

business that serviced the area with Excavation and Field Drainage Systems. After raising their family in Stockton, they retired and moved to Elizabeth.

Bob and Viola enjoyed traveling, playing cards, hosting holiday family gatherings and of course being parents and becoming grandparents to many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

She is survived by her children, Ronald (Kay) Nickel of Fayetteville, NC, Connie Rees of Ft. Atkinson WI, Richard Nickel of Freeport, and Kay (Brent) Offenheiser of Elizabeth and her sister

Beverly Kloss of Elizabeth, and many nieces & nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents; sisters, Shirley Schuld and Vera Thomasson and her granddaughter Melissa Nickel and great grandson Danny Rees.

Funeral Services were held Tuesday May 28, 2024, at Burke Tubbs Funeral Home, Freeport, IL. Our sincere appreciation goes out to the caring and loving staff at Midwest Senior Care in Galena who made Mom's days as good as possible over the past few years and Hospice Care of Dubuque for her comfort and care.

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With recession fears subsiding, new state economic forecast expects 'firm but steady growth'

By Jerry Nowicki
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

The state's two main fiscal forecasting agencies agree: Illinois' finances will see a strong close in the final 3 1/2 months of the fiscal year before things tighten a bit next year.

It's a picture laid out in Gov. JB Pritzker's budget proposal last month, and it got a vote of confidence last week from the legislature's fiscal forecasting body, the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability.

"So looking into fiscal year 25, what are we seeing? There is some concern going forward that the economy, or not necessarily the economy, but the revenues are slowing down," COGFA revenue manager Eric Noggle said at the annual revenue briefing to the bipartisan commission of lawmakers.

Still, COGFA staff noted general nationwide fears of a recession have subsided, and the scope of the potential slowdown is reflected in Pritzker's proposed spending plan for the upcoming fiscal year.

"During our last annual revenue meeting, we mentioned

that many of the economic firms were still forecasting such a chance of a recession," COGFA executive director Clayton Klenke said. "But we mentioned that the data that we saw coming in month to month gave us greater confidence that the economy would continue to chug along. And that is what we have continued to see."

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COGFA's revised revenue estimates expect the current fiscal year to end with \$52.6 billion in revenue, or about \$2

billion ahead of what lawmakers budgeted for last May.

That estimate tracks closely with the revenue estimate released by the Governor's Office of Management and Budget in February. The GOMB estimate was about 0.7 percent, or \$374 million, below COGFA's updated projection.

Current-year revenue estimates have been driven upward by strong economic performance, as seen by an annual transfer from the state's income tax refund fund that exceeded expectations by \$255 million. Larger than expected transfers from that fund are a general indicator that individual household incomes are performing strongly, driven by such factors as strong stock market or interest gains in the previous fiscal year.

But state coffers also saw about \$881 million in unexpected one-time revenues this year, according to COGFA. That includes \$633 million received from the federal government as reimbursement for Medicaid services the state failed to collect in previous fiscal years.

Because those one-time sources are not expected to repeat, COGFA is expecting revenues to decrease to about \$52.1 billion in the fiscal year that begins July 1.

That's \$916 million below GOMB's estimate that was included in Pritzker's budget proposal. But Pritzker's plan also anticipates raising more than \$1 billion in additional revenue through tax law changes, including more than doubling the state tax on sports betting and extending a cap on a tax credit for net operating losses that businesses can claim.

Factoring in those changes, COGFA's estimate would be about \$182 million above what the governor's office projected in February — a difference of just 0.3 percent.

Benjamin Varner, COGFA's chief economist, said the state's economic projections are largely based on data from the financial analytics group S&P Global.

S&P projected a 55 percent likelihood that the economy will progress "with firm but slowing growth." It projected a

30 percent likelihood of a "pessimistic" scenario which would entail "a short, two-quarter recession." A more optimistic scenario, marked by "stronger consumer demand and more banking support," was given a 15 percent likelihood.

Noggle noted sales tax revenues are a main area of concern, driven by a slowdown in "big item purchases." He said that was a result of the federal reserve keeping interest rates high, which discourages borrowing.

Growth in sales tax has also slowed as federal stimulus funds have waned, he said, and consumers are slowly moving back toward pre-pandemic trends of spending more money on untaxed services than on taxable goods. Wages and employment are still growing in Illinois, but at a slower pace than one year ago.

Sen. Elgie Sims, D-Chicago, noted Illinois' recent string of revenue overperformance is at least partially attributable to the fact that lawmakers have adopted conservative revenue estimates.

"In these times of uncertain-

ty, if things go bad, it could go really bad," Noggle responded. "And I think it's our responsibility to not provide a number that is too optimistic or too pessimistic."

Caution, Noggle noted earlier in the meeting, is one reason COGFA did not update its personal income tax estimates for the current fiscal year. April and May have generally been volatile and difficult to predict as far as state revenues go, he noted.

But Noggle said his "gut" tells him an upward revision in that category could still be on the horizon.

"Just personally doing my own taxes and talking to my father-in-law and my dad, that all three of us have had to pay more taxes than we expected," he said. "But the good news is, that's because the higher interest income that we've gained from our savings accounts and our CDs and stuff like that. So if that is the same case throughout the state, which it probably will be, I think revenues will turn out to be pretty good from final tax payments in this fiscal year."

Northwest Illinois Daily Drawing May winners

The May winners in the 2023-2024 drawing year for the Northwest Illinois Daily, a cooperative fundraiser, have been announced. The Daily Drawing is a drawing for 366 daily cash prizes from Oct. 1, 2023, to Sept. 30, 2024, to those donating for a ticket. Over \$21,000 is paid out to ticket holders during the drawing year. Cash prizes vary between \$50 and \$250. A ticket may win multiple times as each ticket remains in the drawing each day for the entire year, no matter how often it may be drawn.

Sponsoring organizations from Jo Daviess, Carroll & Stephenson County include: Caring Community of Elizabeth, East Dubuque Music Boosters, Eastland Music Boosters, Galena Key Club, Hanover Alumni Association, Hanover Chamber of Commerce, Lena-Winslow Education Foundation, Midwest Medical Center Auxiliary Foundation, Pearl City Athletic Boosters, Philanthropic Educational Organization-Chapter OH, River Ridge Drama Club, Scales Mound Travelers, Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge, Stockton Girls Sports, Warren Athletic Boosters and West Carroll Sports Boosters.

- Pearl City
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 - \$50 – Chase Stodden, Galena
 - \$50 – Kathy Wand, Elizabeth
 - \$50 – Lorie Wright, Stockton
 - \$50 – Don Schaible, Hanover
 - \$50 – Jenny Stoddard, Mt Carroll
 - \$150 – Greg Jones, Scales Mound
 - \$50 – Kyle Spahn, Hanover
 - \$50 – Jim Holland, Elizabeth
 - \$50 – Peter Huschitt, Apple

- River
 - \$50 – Keegan Saunders, Warren
 - \$50 – Kirstin Vogt, Hazel Green, WI
 - \$50 – Katie Foote, East Dubuque
 - \$50 – Sue Haas, Elizabeth
 - \$50 – Randy Holland, Hanover
 - \$50 – Anya Travis, Apple River
 - \$50 – Paul Knauer, Elizabeth
 - \$50 – Matt Blaum, Galena
 - \$50 – Matt Jones, Lanark
 - \$50 – Ron Babcock, Galena
 - \$50 – Patricia Muschamp, Falls Church, VA
 - \$150 – Stan Bousson, Moline
 - \$50 – Marlen Greene, Lena
 - \$50 – Anna Heller, Galena
 - \$50 – Derrick Wallin, Scales Mound
 - \$50 – Rodney Randecker, Stockton

• Graduates

(Continued from front page)

Madilyn Diddens, of Pearl City, plans to study Finance and Accounting at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in the fall. Diddens said a community college education allowed her to start college in a more manageable way, gaining the confidence to prepare for a university: "Highland has opened a door for me that I would not think possible had I gone right to a bigger school. I cherish the friends I have made, and I am ready to go forward."

Allison Coon, of Freeport, served as a Student Trustee on the Highland Board of Trustees, and was active with Student Senate. Both experiences gave her the leadership skills needed to move ahead with a career in Radioactive Therapy. She plans to further her studies in the fall at Bellin College in Green Bay, Wis.: "I acted in the best interest of the students, the college and the system by knowing the issues facing students. Interact-

ing with students, including those in student government and campus organizations, is one of many ways to support the experiences of my peers."

Kaitlyn Meyerhofer, of Freeport, plans to further her education at Sauk Valley College to study Radiologic Technology. She credits Advisor Beth Groshans with helping her narrow her career goals: "Highland allowed me to explore a path, and with the help of others, I discovered the career I wanted to take. Highland is small, and

it helped prepare me to go forward in life. It's a great school."

Trace Williamson, of Stockton, plans to take the summer off to work as he explores schools to become an air traffic controller. Williamson said he explored many ideas for his future and it was Advisor Vicki Schulz who set him on a course to find the right fit for his career: "I am proud of my accomplishments at Highland. The resources have helped me improve and look clearly at my future."

THE SCOOP TODAY

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Telephone: 815-369-4112

Email: News/Letters to the Editor and Classifieds:

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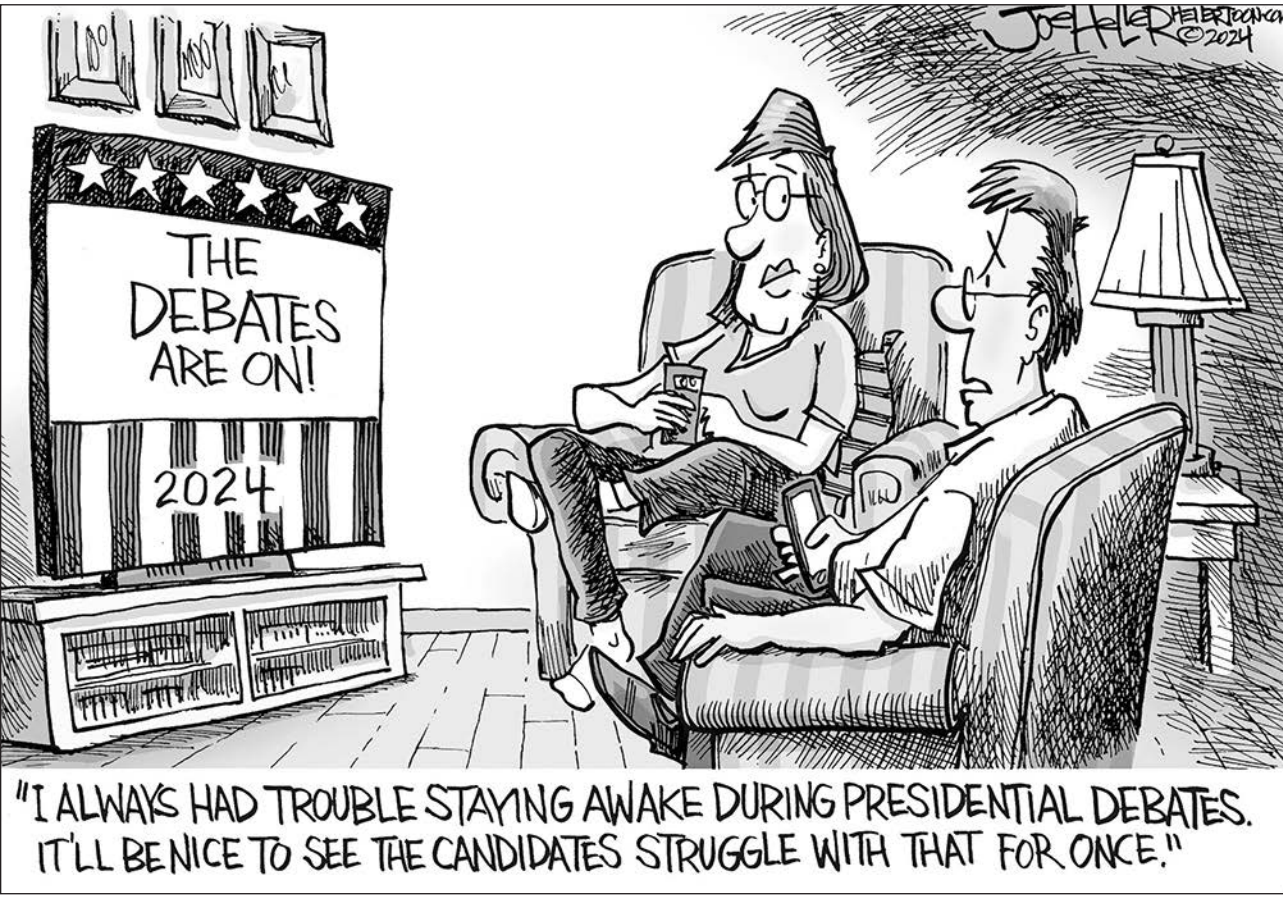
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OPINION



"I ALWAYS HAD TROUBLE STAYING AWAKE DURING PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES. IT'LL BE NICE TO SEE THE CANDIDATES STRUGGLE WITH THAT FOR ONCE."

Weekly connection Vets Roll



By **SCOTT CERNEK**
Columnist

I originally wrote this article in the spring of 2017. It's now eight years later and this year one of our great friends, a Vietnam Vet was able to take this same trip to D.C. Thank you vets and thanks to all who sacrificed their lives that we might be free.

The Alarm clock went off at 3:15 early Sunday morning, and my wife and I woke up, groggily got dressed and headed out the door for the Eclipse Center in Beloit. When we arrived the place was already hopping. There were many people hustling around the parking lot and inside the building including Vets Roll volunteers, family members and the Veterans themselves gathering for the big send off. We found my wife's Dad and Mom, along with my sister-in-law, already sitting at a table waiting. This was going to be my Father-in-law's first trip to D.C. since 1976. He told us that he hadn't slept at all that night because he was so excited and didn't want to miss his wake up alarm. There were many familiar faces there from Clinton and other nearby communities. We chatted and shook hands with many enthusiastic friends as we waited for our instructions.

Mark Finnegan, who along with his brother John, are the directors of Vets Roll, which has bussed veterans to Washington D.C. for eight straight years. Mark began to speak at the microphone. He gave a rousing welcome to all the Vets, Rosie the Riveters, and the many volunteers who were going to be a part of this great event. He explained that there were vets from twelve different states who were in the group this year, and that sixty of them were over eighty-five years of age. He shared how privileged he felt to be able to honor these wonderful men and women who served our country and helped to preserve our freedoms in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

A charming old vet then

was called up to play Taps on his trumpet. He did a fine job and gave a stirring salute when he finished to the cheers of the hundreds in attendance. Then long time Clinton school board member, Randy Gracyalny, led us in the singing of the Star Spangled Banner. It was another spine tingling moment as the voices of what was in essence a large men's choir rang out in unison. Finally, Pastor Dave Meding from Central Christian Church led us in prayer. He exalted the name of Almighty God, our creator, who has blessed this country from the beginning with a foundation of Godly strength and Biblical truth. He asked for protection and God's blessing over the three day journey that lie ahead. A loud "amen" rang out as he finished his prayer.

After the opening ceremony, my wife and I hopped in my truck and headed down Riverside Drive which was decorated with hundreds of American flags. We parked and watched the many motorcycles and police vehicles that were leading the ten Badger Coach busses out of town. We parked near two large fire trucks that were set up to spray a double arc of water over the road as the busses passed under. As the busses went by we waved and cheered. Somehow we managed to stay dry. All in all it was a very impressive send off and all accomplished before 5:30 in the morning.

Psalm 33:12 reads; Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage! It is abundantly clear that this nation has been blessed like no other nation on God's green earth. God raised up this generation of great men and women to defend and protect this country in the twentieth century, and now it's our turn to honor them and thank God for His blessings. By the time this article comes out the travelers will all be home, Lord willing as they return Wednesday night. We are so proud of our vets! Thank you all! Until next week, may God continue to bless us.

In my opinion

Tax credits key to filling need for more, affordable housing in Illinois

Drive through any community in Illinois and you're sure to see the orange cones and blinking lights of a road construction zone. You might also see crews building a new restaurant, bank, or gas station.

And in many communities, you'll see the cranes and earthmovers building a new manufacturing facility, data center, or electric vehicle assembly plant. But even amid all this construction, it's less common, rare even, to spot a new home or subdivision being




By **TOM DEMMER**
Executive Director of the Lee County Industrial Development Association

built. Illinois has the ninth highest housing deficit in the nation, and that deficit has grown 64 percent over the past decade. Ask a mayor what is most in need in their community, and more times than not the answer

will be safe, stable housing that their residents can afford. When I served in the Illinois House of Representatives, I worked across the aisle to advocate for affordable housing because I saw how safe and stable housing improves public safety, health care, education, and community services. We found support from legislators across the state, in communities large and small, because the lack of affordable housing is a concern for residents in every district. Now I serve as the president of an economic development organization in Lee County, a rural county west of Chicago, and I see another reason for supporting affordable housing: It's vitally important to our economy. Every day I talk with site selectors, developers, and companies looking to build or grow in Illinois. Local population and available workforce are among their top criteria for choosing where to locate. Large projects and developments can add hundreds of new jobs to a community and often bring additional pressure to an already notable housing shortage.


See **OPINION**, Page 5

Keep "family" in family farm



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Stockton Servant Leadership end-of-year cookout is bittersweet

Saying goodbye to our group of seniors who did wonderful things in our community is hard. Saying hello to our new team members is exciting. Having both groups together for a celebration cookout? Bittersweet.

The Stockton Servant Leadership team held an end-of-the-year cookout on May 5 to welcome new members and to wish the outgoing seniors well. Over the past two years, the six seniors pictured have accomplished much.

Here is a partial list noting

- the hours and types of service they have donated to the community:
- Donated over 600 hours of time with community service
- Packed and delivered over 990 bags of food for needy families in our district
- Bought more than 3,000 pounds of food to fill these bags
- Bought and wrapped over 150 Christmas gifts for our

SNOW kids

- Completed more than 50 hours of leadership training at HCC
- Raised over \$15,000 dollars for several community members in need
- Eaten an unknown number of Casey's pizzas and BREAK-N-BAKE cookies

Thank you seniors and welcome new Servant Leaders!
Stockton Leadership Team



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing
Senior Servant Leaders display their college hoodies and Highland Community College graduation cords. Pictured left to right are Jared Dvorak, Bennett Graves, Lincoln Legel, Ashlyn Schubert, Braden Freese and Gracie Raab.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing
The incoming Stockton Servant Leadership team for 2024-25 are pictured left to right: Marjerie Pilapil, Hailey Weipert, Kyla Arnold, Ava Hess, Masyn Cahill, Mauricio Glass and Sadie Vanderheyden.

Opinion (Continued from page 4)

If we want Illinois to remain competitive in site selection and economic development, we must build more homes and apartments.

The Build Illinois Homes Tax Credit is a key part of the solution. Over the first five years, this tax credit can attract new private investment to build 5,745 new affordable houses in communities across the state, allowing us to draw down unused federal tax credits, create high-quality jobs, and generate new tax base.

Critically, the Build Illinois Homes Tax Credit is designed to provide new phases of funding each year, which provides the stability developers need to make plans for the future instead of rushing to apply for a one-and-done round of funding.

New affordable housing options will provide thousands of Illinoisans with good places to live and support the

revitalization of communities that have been stagnated by the housing shortage. And as site selectors and developers evaluate potential project locations, new homes and residents will give Illinois communities a real competitive advantage.

That's why the Build Illinois Homes Tax Credit has attracted a diverse group of supporters, including LiUNA Midwest, the Illinois Manufacturers' Association, the Chicago Teachers Union, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, and many more.

I'm glad to show my strong

support for the Build Illinois Tax Credit. I urge my former colleagues and friends on both sides of the aisle in the Illinois General Assembly to enact this incentive and support economic growth in communities across our great state.

Tom Demmer is executive director of the Lee County Industrial Development Association, and was a Republican state representative from 2013 to 2023 for Lee, Ogle, DeKalb and LaSalle counties in north-central Illinois.



UPCOMING AUCTIONS

SUNDAY, JUNE 2 • 7 P.M.
ONLINE ONLY PUBLIC AUCTION
WWW.KITSONAUCTIONS.COM

MULTI-LOCATION BELVIDERE, IL/SYCAMORE, IL

VEHICLES: 1993 Corvette Convertible 40th anniversary 32,000 miles, 1938 Ford Truck, 2013 Dodge Charger 91k, 2011 Ford cargo van 123k, 2018 Ford Explorer interceptor 135k, 1948 International Stake bed truck, 1993 Bluebird prison transport bus, 1996 Ford L8000 box truck 312k, 1997 Chevy Party bus 89K, 2010 Ford E350 Medtec ambulance, 2000 Chevy Astro cargo van 101k, 2007 Ford F150 with liftgate 132k, 2008 Dodge Ram 1500 228k, 2005 Chevy 3500 box truck 169k, 1966 Bridgestone DT175 vintage motorcycle, 2004 Ford F150 XLT 281k, 2007 Chevy Impala former taxi.

Outdoor power equipment: Cub Cadet 782 with cab/deck/blower/blade, John Deere 320, Heckendorn 88" riding mower, Cub Cadet #1 cart, Turfco Pro-26 aerator, numerous snowblowers, Ford 8n, lawn carts, Aaladin hot water pressure washer, Dearborn 2 bottom plow, Simplicity sun runner, Simplicity 3108, Simplicity 707, Simplicity 606, Simplicity Model W, Montgomery Ward Squire 9, Lawnboy rider, Buebird power rake, 4,000 watt pto generator, Bolens Huski with attachments, Locke greens mower, Cunningham MA sickle mower, Eclipse powered reel mower, Cyclone seeder, Yazoo 26" mower, Toro greens mower, Chris Cut mower.

MISC.: New Speedaire upright compressor, Smith upright compressor, PTO wire winder, lawnsweeper, wheel barrows, gas cans, floor jacks, anvil, bicycles, pallet jacks, vintage go cart, new electric wheel chair bases, and more still being added to the catalog.

TUESDAY, JUNE 4 • 7 P.M.
ONLINE ONLY MODEL TRAIN AUCTION LIONEL & MORE
WWW.KITSONAUCTIONS.COM

BELVIDERE, IL

500 lots of vintage and modern Lionel trains. These all come from one local private collection. We have assorted cars, locomotives, many rare sets, accessories, and much more. This is one of multiple auctions for this collection.

SATURDAY, JUNE 15 • 10 A.M.
AL PAGE ESTATE LIVE AUCTION
11050 CEMETERY RD., CAPRON, IL

VEHICLES/BOATS: 2015 Chevy Silverado LTZ 4x4 LTZ, Ford L8000 Semi with van trailer, multiple fishing boats.

MISC.: Outdoor motors, large selection of fishing equipment, like new mobility scooter, Stihl power equipment, gas powered welder/generator, large assortment of tools, Suzuki 750 4x4 ATV, log splitter, John Deere 950 with loader, 3 pt snowblower, 3 pt brush mower, 3 pt post auger, grass collection system, gas powered RC trucks, antique RC Cola thermometer, new tires, Coleman lantern collection, lifetime folding picnic tables, Solar power equipment, 24' truck box converted to dog kennel (super nice), dog equipment, dog box for truck bed, and much more.

This is a very partial listing as we are still setting up. There will be a very limited online bidding catalog for this auction.

Andrew Kitson 815-973-0915 • www.KitsonAuctions.com

HWY 64 JUNE CONSIGNMENT AUCTION

JUNE 8TH - ONLINE & ONSITE - STARTING AT 8:00 AM - 2 RINGS
JUNE 9TH - TIMED ONLINE ONLY - ITEMS START COMING OFF AT 8:00 AM
Auction Location: 5498 Hwy 64 Baldwin, IA 52207

JOIN US FOR OUR 2 DAY AUCTION - 1500+ ITEMS!

JUNE 8TH 2024 - Large Farm Equipment, Construction Equipment, Trucks, Trailers, & More!

ONLINE THROUGH EQUIPMENT FACTS

JUNE 9TH 2024 - Support Equipment, Attachments, Lawn & Garden, Mini Excavators, & More!

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HWY 64 AUCTIONS
5498 Hwy 64 Baldwin, IA 52207
Hwy 64 Office: 563-673-6400
Scott Franzen: 319-480-3604
Sheri Dosland: 563-212-0453



Stephenson County Farm Bureau news

By Victoria Hansen

A few weeks ago, I picked up my four-year-old niece as we drove from her house to meet my mom and her grandmother at church. We passed the iconic fiber glass cow that stands in the middle of downtown, Harvard, IL. As we were stopped at a stop light, she pointed out the cow and I asked if she knew the cow's name. She said she didn't and so I began to explain to her that the cow's name was Harmilda, which stands for Harvard Milk Days. Well as most four-year-olds she didn't seem overly interested in that fact, but I know as her and her siblings grow up, they will begin to embody the tradition of the "Harvard Milk Day Festival" and why we cele-

brate. The first weekend in June which marks the official weekend of Harvard Milk Days. I wanted to share a few facts about this festival that for 83 years has celebrated the dairy industry. The first Harvard Milk Day Festival began on June 18, 1942, when 3,000 people joined together to honor the dairy farmers and dairy industry during war times. Those who attended listened to speeches, sang songs, and drank 500 gallons of milk. Now individuals participate in a parade that travels down the "milky way", which is the whitewashed main street. This is still one of my favorite events and I love sharing it with my nieces and nephews. This year we are looking

forward to the parade on Saturday and the dairy show on Sunday. This event ushers in June Dairy Month, so be sure to thank the dairy farmers in your life.

Carroll County Plat Book update

Unfortunately, there was an unexpected delay with the 2024 Carroll County Plat Book. Sadly, those books will not be available as expected on May 28. We hope to have them no later than June 13. If you would like to be notified when they are available for purchase, please contact our office at 815-244-3001 or email carrollcfboffice@gmail.com. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

Scholarships awarded

The Carroll County Farm Bureau Foundation awarded the following students with \$1,000 scholarships, Aaron Becker, Mount Carroll, Nevin Erbsen, Lanark, Ethan Kessler, Lanark, Jonathan Spoerlein, Lanark and Jace Urish, Chadwick. Jenica Stoner of Lanark received the Harold Schmidt Memorial Forestry Scholarship.

The Stephenson County Farm Bureau Foundation awarded the following students with \$500 scholarships. Recipients include Andrew Kempel, Lena, Weston Lartz, Lena, Brody Mahon, Winslow, Addison Bremmer, Pearl City, Benjamin Bremmer, Pearl City, Marianna Brenner, Pearl

City, Mason Fox, German Valley, Grace Groezinger, Lena, Weston Gronewold, Pearl City, Dausyn Heslop, Leaf River, Samantha Mock, Orangeville, Madison Morri-sett, Rock City, Luke Stabenow, Lena, Odin Stabenow, Lena, Ross Stabenow, Lena, Owen Trone, Stockton, and Elizabeth Wuebbels, Freeport.

Roots and Shoots now accepting grant applications

Stephenson County Farm Bureau Foundation is now accepting applications for our "Roots and Shoots Apprentice/Internship Grants". While Bruce Johnson was the Manager of the Stephenson County Farm Bureau he

established the Roots and Shoots Program. The goal of Roots and Shoots is to encourage Stephenson County youth to explore job opportunities within our community and the agriculture industry. As part of this we are offering a matching grant for Agriculture-related businesses who employ high school students or college students.

More information along with an application is available at www.stephensoncfb.org under "news" tab or by emailing manager@stephensoncfb.org. Funding can be used for intern/apprentice salaries, mileage, employee materials, etc. Applications are due on or before the end of the day on Friday, June 7, 2024.

Church news

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

All are invited to worship at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 118 E. Mason St. Lena, IL on Sunday, June 2 for Worship Service at 9:30 a.m. This week's gospel reading is from the Gospel Mark 2:23-3:6.

On Wednesday, June 5 the Peace Corps Quilting group will meet from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. No quilting experience necessary and all are welcome to join. Come and tie the quilts and make difference in the world.

All the services will be recorded and be available on church's Facebook page and website. Please visit our website and (<http://goodshepherdlena.org/>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/GSLCLenaIL>) for 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 second Sunday after Pentecost and Holy Trinity Sunday on Sunday, June 2 at 9 a.m.

Everyone is welcome to come to St. John's to play dominoes in Luther Hall on Tuesday, June 4 at 9 a.m. and to play cards and dominoes on Thursday, June 27 at 1 p.m.

The next Men's Breakfast will be on Wednesday, June 5 at 7:30 a.m. at the Garden View Restaurant in Lena.

The June Grace Meal will be on Sunday, June 16. Meals can be picked up between 11 a.m. and 12 p.m. on June 16. Reservations are due in the church office by Thursday, June 13. The menu for the June meal will be lasagna, garlic bread, applesauce, and a bar or cake item. This

meal is possible due to donations and a grant from the Foundation of Northwest Illinois.

The Healthy Wolves group will pause the packing of the backpacks for the summer, but they plan on starting again in August when school resumes. If interested in donating to this ministry, reach out to the church office for more information.

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. If you need to contact the pastor or church, you may call 815-443-2215 for information.

Salem United Church of Christ

All are welcome to join a service led by Pastor Christopher Ham at Salem United Church of Christ, 8491 West Salem Road, Lena, Illinois, this Sunday, June 2 at 10 a.m. The Adult Sunday School will be hosted 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 May 29 at 8 a.m. at Amigo's, 306 North Galena Avenue, Freeport, Illinois. Everyone is welcome to join. The group will meet again on June 5 at 8 a.m. at The Big Apple, 1427 West Galena Avenue, Freeport, Illinois.

On Sunday, June 9 the

church will host a special Children's Sunday in Lion's Park. Service will begin at 10 a.m. followed by a potluck style lunch. Please bring a dish to pass and dinnerware.

If interested in participating in a fun evening of crafting, please join for Crafternoon from 4 p.m. to 7 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. This is hosted on the lower level of Salem United Church of Christ, and all are welcome to join. For more information on any Salem related items, contact 815-369-4511 or ruth.dake@gmail.com.

Evangelical Free Church of Lena

The Evangelical Free Church of Lena is having a Family Comedy Night on Sunday, June 2 at 6 p.m. featuring the Green Room Improve Live. This is a group out of Crystal Lake, IL. The event is free and family friendly. Refreshments will be served afterwards.



STEPHENSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FACEBOOK PHOTO *Rock Valley Publishing*

Sheriff's Citizens Scholarship awarded

Each year the Illinois Sheriffs' Association awards at least one \$500 college scholarship to every Sheriff's Office throughout the State of Illinois to be awarded to a local student. This year, the Stephenson County Sheriff's Citizens Scholarship Committee selected Mallory Sheppard of Lena as the recipient of the 2024 Stephenson County ISA Scholarship. Congratulations, Mallory!



FAMILY COMEDY NIGHT

Featuring *Green Room Improv Live from Crystal Lake, IL*

S

Sunday, June 2 - 6 p.m.

Evangelical Free Church of Lena

720 N. Freedom St.,
Lena, IL

*Event is free!
Refreshments to follow.*

456326

St. Joseph Catholic Church

STRAWBERRY SOCIAL

When: Wednesday, June 5

Where: 410 W. Lena St., Parish Hall

Time: 4:30 - 7 p.m.

Adults \$12 • Kids 12 & under \$8
Extra Sandwich \$5
Price includes full meal with dessert

Dine in or carry out
Tickets available at the door

Meal: BBQ or ham sandwich, baked beans, chips, lemonade or coffee
Dessert: Strawberry pie, strawberry shortcake or strawberry sundae

No whole pies will be sold

Stockton Elementary's top readers

Stockton Elementary Principal Mrs. Downey recognizes the Top Readers for the 2023-2024 school year. Each student received a certificate and an Amazon gift card. The top readers are fifth grader Olivia L., fourth graders Brynley D. and Maya A., third graders Sydney C. and Axel O. (not pictured), and second graders Adalyn D. and Liliana D.



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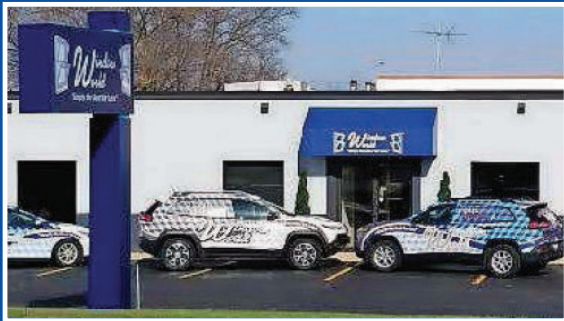
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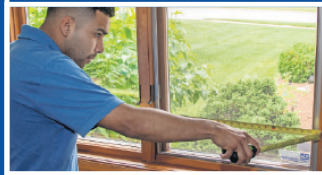


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Around the Northern Hills

The Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau Foundation provides scholarships for college students studying agriculture and funds our Agriculture in the Classroom program, which promotes agricultural and environmental education in all of Jo Daviess County's K-12 classrooms.

Each year, our Agriculture in the Classroom program teaches children the importance of our food and fiber industry. Anyone can contribute to the Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau Foundation since it has a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. The Foundation may accept charitable contributions of money, property, securities, and special memorials and endowments. The Foundation Board of Directors and the Farm Bureau staff administer the Foundation. The Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau Board of Directors appoints the Foundation directors. There are two ways to make a contribution. You can send a check to our office at PO Box 501 in Elizabeth or call with a credit or debit card to contribute.

Local member benefits

Don't forget to take advantage of member-only benefits for Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau members. We have businesses around the County who have partnered with



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

us to offer these discounts. Make sure to have your farm bureau membership card handy when asking for those discounts. For a full listing of the local benefits, go to our website www.jodaviescfb.com and click on membership, then local discounts.

Stay connected

Thank you to everyone who currently follows us on Facebook and Instagram! We have a pretty good following, but always want to reach more people. If you don't follow our pages and are on social media, follow us. You will find information about upcoming events as well as be able to check out our recent posts.

Family Farm signs

It's the time of year that we are all thinking of planting and sprucing things up around the farm. Why not add a "This is a Family Farm" sign to your landscape? The signs are 17.5" X 23" and cost \$30.

Farm Fun Fact

96% of Illinois farms are family owned.

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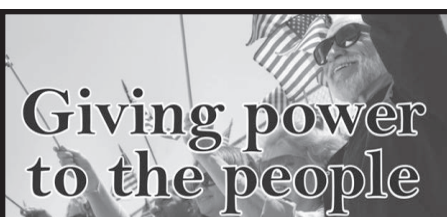
*SEE OUR WEBSITE OR A TEAM MEMBER FOR DETAILS



SONYA WILLIAMSON PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

That's a wrap

Stockton High School seniors celebrate their high school graduation on Sunday, May 19, 2024. Congratulations to all the graduates!



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2024 Annual Meeting of Members - Please join us!

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Thursday, June 20, 2024

Saint Malachy School
595 E Ogden Ave.
Geneseo, IL 61254

4:30 p.m.
Member registration

4:30-5:30 p.m.
Geothermal Power Hour
presentation with John Scott

6:00 p.m.
Meeting

7:00 p.m.
Pork chop sandwich dinner

Activities for kids ages 5-12 during the meeting.



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Members who attend the meeting will receive one \$10 bill credit per membership.

456385

FROM LENA'S KITCHEN



The not so skinny cook

The official start of summer is signaled by Memorial Day. I probably write that every year, but I hear it on television every year. The parades and programs have been celebrated, and the picnics have started. This week's recipes have some interesting summer dishes. Have a great week cooking!

Mini Crab Cakes with Cream Sauce

There seems to be a crab theme going this week. This appetizer is an easy and tasty one that you can prepare ahead of time. You can use the canned lump crab meat or the fresh lump crab if you can find it.

Cream Sauce

- 1/4 C. sour cream
- 1 T. whole grain mustard (Grey Poupon)
- 1 t. Dijon mustard
- 1/8 t. Old Bay Seafood Seasoning

Crab Cakes

- 2 slices white sandwich bread
- 1 lb. imitation crab meat, chopped into small pieces
- 1/4 C. mayonnaise
- 1 T. lemon zest, plus lemon wedges for serving
- 1 t. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 t. Old Bay
- 1/8 t. cayenne pepper
- 2 green onions, finely chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 egg, beaten
- 3 T. unsalted butter
- 1 T. chopped chives for garnish

nish

Cream sauce: Mix together in a small bowl the sour cream, mustards, and Old Bay until smooth. Cover and refrigerate until time to serve.

Crab Cakes: Pulse the bread in a food processor to make coarse breadcrumbs; transfer to a large bowl. Add the crab, mayo, lemon zest, Worcestershire, Old Bay, cayenne, green onions, 1/4 t. salt and 1/8 t. pepper. Mix gently to combine. Add the egg and mix gently but thoroughly. Roll the mixture into 15 golf ball-sized rounds; arrange them on a foil-lined baking sheet and flatten them slightly. Refrigerate at least 30 minutes to set. Melt the butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Cook the crab cakes in batches if necessary, turning once, until golden brown on both sides and heated through, about 3 to 4 minutes per side. Arrange the crab cakes on a serving platter and serve with the Cream Sauce in a small bowl. Sprinkle the chives and serve with lime wedges.

Spring Vegetable Salad with Vinaigrette Dressing

This tasty and crunchy vegetable salad is great for any summer meal. You should be able to get the pea pods, snow peas, and asparagus at the Lena's Farmer's Market on Saturday. Use frozen baby peas if you don't have fresh peas. If you can't find white wine vinegar, you can substitute rice vinegar or red wine vinegar in the dressing.

- 2 T. white wine vinegar
- 1 T. horseradish
- 2 t. lemon extract
- 2 T. extra virgin olive oil
- Salt to taste
- 4 C. mixed peas and pea pods, snow peas, and asparagus

2 radishes, thinly sliced, about 1/2 C.

1 thinly sliced cucumber, about 1 C.

1 T. chopped fresh dill

Dressing: Combine the vinegar, horseradish, and lemon extract in a mixing bowl and stir to combine. Whisk in the olive oil and season to taste with salt.

Bring a large pot of water to boil. Set up a bowl of ice water next to the stove and set a colander inside the ice water so that no ice is in the colander. Stir a little salt in boiling water. Add the vegetables in separate groups to boiling water and cook each batch until just tender, about a minute; each vegetable should still have a little snap. Place in ice water after cooking. Drain in colander. Pat dry. Place in serving bowl. Add radishes and cucumbers. Toss with dressing to combine. Season to taste with salt. Garnish with dill.

Openly Crabby

Sticking with the crab theme, these can be used as an appetizer or as a main course for any summer meal. The Texas toast should be easy to find. If you want a more inexpensive dish, use the imitation crab meat. It isn't as rich, but I like it, and it is easier on the grocery bill.

- 1/2 lb. jumbo crabmeat, picked through
- 2 T. mayonnaise
- 2 t. Dijon mustard
- 1/4 t. paprika
- 2 t. fresh lemon juice
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced
- Pinch of salt
- 4 slices Texas toast
- 4 T. unsalted butter, melted
- 2 oz. Monterey Jack, half grated, the half thinly sliced
- 1 bunch of asparagus, trimmed and halved lengthwise

Mix the crabmeat with the mayo, mustard, paprika, cayenne, lemon juice, onion and a pinch of salt in a bowl; set aside. Preheat the broiler. Brush both sides of the Texas toast with half of the melted butter. Place on a baking sheet and broil until golden brown on top, about 3 minutes. Remove from the oven and flip the bread; top with the crab mixture, spreading it almost to the edges. Sprinkle the grated cheese over the crab.

Toss the asparagus with the remaining melted butter in a medium bowl and season with salt and black pepper. Arrange side by side on the toast; arrange the cheese slices across the middle of the asparagus. Return to the broiler until the asparagus is tender and the cheese is melted. You can substitute English muffins for the Texas toast. Brush with butter on one side and broil and then proceed with the rest of the sandwich.

Hamburger Stroganoff with Poppy Seed Noodles

If you are looking for an inexpensive main meal, this stove-top dish is the one for you. I have made a hamburger stroganoff before but never served it with the poppy seed noodles. Cook the noodles in beef bouillon for more flavor.

- 1 1/2 lbs ground beef
- 1/2 C. chopped onion
- 1/2 T. butter
- 2 T. flour
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/4 t. pepper
- 1 can (4 oz.) mushrooms, stems and pieces, drained
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 C. sour cream
- Poppy Seed Noodles
- 8 oz. wide noodles, cooked

and drained

2 t. poppy seeds
1 T. butter, melted
Fresh parsley for garnish

In a large skillet, brown hamburger and onion with butter, crumbling beef until meat is no longer pink. Stir in flour, salt, garlic, pepper and mushrooms. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Stir in soup; bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce the heat; simmer, uncovered for 10 minutes. Stir in sour cream; heat through, but do not boil.

Combine noodles, poppy seeds and melted butter; toss lightly. Serve stroganoff with noodles. Garnish with parsley.

Strawberry Shortbread Dessert

You can make this dessert and freeze it for two weeks. You use frozen strawberries, Cool Whip, pretzels, and sweetened condensed milk to make this delicious dessert. You can use the daiquiri mix to make drinks with the leftovers. Cut off a slice, and you have dessert!

- 1 1/4 C. crushed pretzels
 - 1/4 C. sugar
 - 1/2 C. butter, melted
- Filling**
- 1 can (14 oz.) sweetened condensed milk
 - 1/2 C. thawed nonalcoholic strawberry daiquiri mix
 - 1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened
 - 2 C. frozen sweetened sliced strawberries, thawed
 - 1 carton (8 oz.) Cool Whip topping, thawed
- Sauce**
- 1 container (16 oz.) frozen sweetened sliced strawberries thawed and undrained

In a large bowl, combine sweetened condensed milk and daiquiri mix. Beat in cream cheese until smooth. Stir in strawberries, fold in Cool Whip. Pour over crust. Dish will be full. Freeze 4 hours before serving. **Sauce:** Puree thawed undrained strawberries in a food processor or blender. Strain through a mesh sieve. Drizzle over the top of each serving of dessert.

Rhubarb Custard Bars

As long as people keep sending or requesting rhubarb recipes, I will put them in the column. I feel really sorry for those of you who are not rhubarb lovers, but they will come to an end in the near future!

- 2 C. flour
 - 1/4 sugar
 - 1 C. cold butter
- Filling**
- 2 C. sugar

- 2 T. flour
 - 1 C. heavy whipping cream
 - 3 eggs, beaten
 - 5 C. finely chopped fresh or frozen rhubarb, thawed and drained
- Topping**
- 6 oz. cream cheese, softened
 - 1/2 C. sugar
 - 1/2 t. vanilla
 - 1 C. heavy whipping cream, whipped

Preheat oven to 350. In a bowl, combine the flour and sugar. Cut in cold butter and mix until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Press into a greased 9x13 baking dish. Bake at 350 for 10 minutes. **Filling:** Combine sugar and flour in a bowl. Whisk in frozen and eggs. Stir in the rhubarb. Pour over the crust. Bake at 350 until custard is set, 40 to 45 minutes. Cool. **Topping:** Beat cream cheese, sugar, and vanilla until smooth. Fold in whipped cream and spread over top. Cover and chill. Cut into bars. Store in refrigerator.

Final Thoughts

Vidalia onions are in the stores! I love Vidalia onions, and I am glad to see them available. Several weeks ago, I had the blooming onion recipe, and Vidalias make wonderful blooming onions. I still am cutting asparagus, so that is still a springtime treat. I hear that the strawberries are supposed to be a good crop this year.

Don't forget the about Lena Farmer's Market on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. They will start having produce in addition to the other goodies. A friend brought me the neatest garden flag from one of the vendors. Splashland pool and the Mini Golf are open also. Schools are out, and summer activities with park districts and lessons have begun. The last days of May are winding down, and June is ready to bust out. Hopefully we will have no more storms running rampant and doing damage. Reminder—the Music at the Lake on Saturdays continues; drop by for some beautiful Christian music under the stars. One last thing—check out the Lena Drive Inn. They have added a new soft cone of pineapple and raspberry flavors. I am game to try it.

We continue to look for summer fruit and vegetable recipes, so send some favorites our way. If you find some recipes to share, you can contact us by email at scoopshopper@rvpublishing.com or by mail at From Lena's Kitchens, *The Shopper's Guide* at Rock Valley Publishing, 1102 Ann St., Delavan, WI 53115. Have a great week.

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Summer dental care

In just a few short days many of our area's students will be graduating from high school and preparing themselves for a new stage in life. In all the excitement and change, it can be easy to overlook your dental health. Whether you are preparing yourself for college or entering the work force, be sure to book a dental exam before you head off to dorm life or begin that new career. Being diligent about routine dental exams, daily oral hygiene, and eating a healthy diet will serve you well as you enter adult life.



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

things on their minds over the summer, but most would not put wearing their teeth aligners or retainers on their list of summertime concerns. However, inconsistent use of these appliances during summer can significantly impact progress in reshaping or retaining their healthy tooth alignment.

Whether your child is packing for a day at the park or pool, or for longer trips such as sports camp or a family vacation, make it a habit to place their retainer at the top of their packing list. Have them label their retainer case with their name and contact information. They may want to decorate it as well, so it is easy to distinguish it from any others. Teach them to remove their retainer and store it in its case when they go swimming, diving, or engage in other water sports. Storing it only in its case significantly reduces the chance of it getting damaged, lost, or tossed in the trash. Teach them not to leave their retainer in a hot car, sunny window, or other heated area. Remind them to brush their retainer when they brush their teeth.

Speaking of family vacations, a condition known as barodontalgia occurs when a person's body undergoes a sudden pressure change, such as when a plane ascends. This condition is much more likely to occur in people with underlying dental problems. Do not ruin an expensive and/or long-awaited vacation

with a dental emergency. Decayed and abscessed teeth do not resolve themselves on their own, so make an appointment with your dentist to treat these issues before booking that flight. This is critical if you are planning on deep water scuba diving or hiking in the mountains, as both these activities involve pressure changes. Even if you are not flying, if you suspect you have a dental issue, schedule an appointment to avoid a dental emergency far from home.

Dry mouths breed harmful bacteria. Teach your child to stay hydrated by drinking fluoridated water. Staying hydrated with fluoridated water is one of the body's most reliable defenses against tooth decay and gum disease. Swishing water after each snack and meal will also help to keep your child's mouth clean and hydrated. Encourage this habit by

keeping a bottle of fluoridated tap water for each child close at hand. Make sure that their diet contains fruits and vegetables with a high-water content (for example, watermelon, lettuce, and spinach are almost entirely water). While nothing beats fluoridated water for routine hydration, choose milk, with its electrolytes, calories, fat, and proteins, to rehydrate and prevent muscle soreness after any intense or prolonged physical activity or exercise.

If your child participates in summer sports, it is imperative that they wear a mouthguard. A mouthguard not only protects the teeth and soft tissues in the mouth but stabilizes the jaw and acts as a shock absorber with impact trauma. Mouth guards are also recommended for non-contact sports and other summer activities that pose a risk of injury to the mouth, such as skateboarding.

Citizens State Bank awards 13 college scholarships to area graduates

Citizens State Bank, with locations in Lena, Stockton, Freeport, Elizabeth, and Savanna, has awarded \$500 college scholarships to local graduating high school seniors who have displayed excellence in academic achievement, community service, and extracurricular activities. "Congratulations to our 2024 high school scholarship recipients! Your dedication and achievements inspire us all, and we're proud to support your journey towards excellence," said Citizens State Bank President and CEO, Amy Baker.

Citizens State Bank is proud of these recipients for their hard work and academic success. This year's 13 scholarship winners are:

- Chloe Mader, Lena-Winslow High School
- Faith Offermann, Lena-Winslow High School
- Odin Stabenow, Lena-Winslow High School
- Luke Stabenow, Lena-Winslow High School
- Karl Hubb, Stockton High School
- Braden Freese, Stockton High School
- Ashlyn Schubert, Stockton High School
- Isabelle Talbert, Aquin High School
- Noah Schiffman, Freeport High School
- Evelyn Walters, River Ridge High School
- Gwendoline Miller, River Ridge High School
- Noah Wenzel, Dakota High School
- Ava Bremmer, Pearl City High School

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Pearl City Education Foundation scholarships available

Applications are now being accepted for the Pearl City Education Foundation (PCEF) 2024-2025 Upper-classman Scholarships. This program is for Pearl City Graduates who have successfully completed their first year of college, vocational, or trade school, and will be going into their second, third, or fourth year as a full-time student.

Scholarship application forms are available at the State Bank of Pearl City

lobby, the Pearl City Public Library, or on the Pearl City Schools website at www.pcwolves.net. The deadline for receipt of completed applications, with required short essay, and most recent transcript(s) is July 1, 2024. Please mail application materials to Pearl City Education Foundation, Upper-classman Scholarships, P.O. Box 278, Pearl City, IL 61062. Timely and complete submissions are necessary for scholarship consideration.

Nursing home industry unlikely to see much help from Springfield in tough budget year

Nursing homes still grappling with worker shortage, cost increases

By Hannah Meisel
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

It's been four years since some of the worst scenes of COVID-19 played out in locked-down nursing homes during the early months of the pandemic.

But while most of the world has moved on, the nursing home industry is still reeling from COVID, which exacerbated pre-existing challenges in long-term care—difficulties hiring and retaining staff and a population more reliant on government-funded care chief among them.

Employment in skilled nursing facilities nationwide as of February was down 8.3 percent compared with February of 2020, the month before the pandemic hit. Although the current staffing levels have somewhat recovered from their lowest point in early spring 2022—when staffing was down 15.5 percent from pre-pandemic levels—other areas within health care have recovered much faster, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation analysis.

The hourly cost of hiring a registered nurse increased

12.5 percent nationwide between 2020 and 2022, to \$40.84 on average, according to a recent report by national consulting firm Marcum LLP. But amid a shrinking pool of RNs applying for jobs at skilled nursing facilities, many operators are forced to hire temporary contract nurses who earn, on average, 70 percent more than the average RN salary. Hiring certified nursing assistants, or CNAs, has followed a similar trend.

Marcum's report, which focused on the three-year period after COVID hit in 2020, cited rising wages in other industries as a key reason for CNAs to leave the industry "and further drive up wage rates and increase the agency pool usage."

For brothers Moe and Sam Freedman, owners of St. Louis-based Accolade Health-care, the increase in staffing costs and the inflation-driven increase in other costs for operating the home—from food to medical supplies to insurance—have become "very unmanageable," president and CEO Moe Freedman said in a recent interview. His compa-

ny has been operating in the red.

Accolade runs seven skilled nursing facilities in central Illinois, in addition to one assisted living facility in East Peoria. The Freedmans entered the industry in 2017, growing from their first acquisition of a pair of nursing homes in Paxton and Pontiac. They've since bought homes from independent operators and said operating a long-term care facility as a "mom-and-pop shop" is "virtually impossible," as rising costs need to be spread across a portfolio of homes for the business to be workable.

"Our cash flow is—we're hemorrhaging and it's dire," Moe Freedman told Capitol News Illinois. "I don't see us growing anytime soon and I don't know if we'll be at the same level in a year from now at the rate that we're at right now."

Keeping staffing up has also been a challenge due to the changing nature of who lives in nursing homes. In recent years, wealthier people have trended toward staying in their homes and receiving

care from visiting nurses and CNAs. As a result, facilities are more dependent on—and at the mercy of—Medicaid reimbursement rates instead of private payers, which had long been a more stable source of revenue.

Overall nursing home census rates haven't recovered since the pandemic either.

"We're forced to cut staff because more patients don't come in the door, yet, when we do see new patients, their level of care has intensified," Nikki Dinsmore, regional director of operations for Zahav Healthcare Consulting said last month at a Capitol news conference. "They're being discharged from the hospital sooner and their care needs are greater."

Zahav, which operates a nursing home in Des Plaines, has been "losing workers to jobs in the hospital or telehealth," Dinsmore said, not to mention jobs in totally different sectors like retail and food service.

But even as the industry grapples with greater reliance on Medicaid instead of private payers, state Sen. Dave

Syverson, R-Rockford, said nursing homes have to be ready to absorb patients when their needs become too great for home care—like his mother, who died earlier this year at age 93.

"We provided home care for her but that started to get more expensive as we had to have visiting nurses, we had to have an aide in there," he said, adding that 24-hour care at a nursing home also felt safer toward the end. "Then you had to have oxygen brought in. And when you start looking at what the daily cost was for us to have her at home, it ended up being cheaper for us in the last couple of months of her life to move her to a nursing home."

'We are still well underwater'

Forty-nine Illinois nursing homes closed between 2019 and 2022, according to the state's Department of Public Health; 2023 data is not yet available. In that same time period, six new facilities opened, for a net loss of 43. The closures mean more than 2,500 nursing home beds have

vanished.

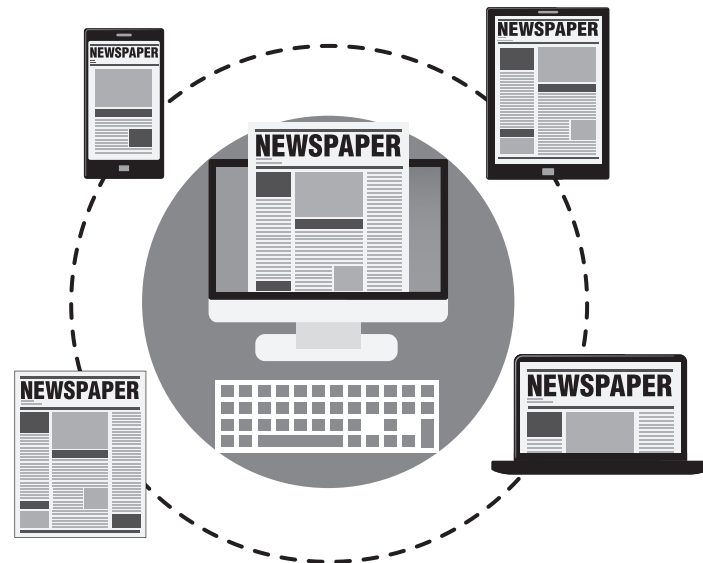
Peoria-based Petersen Health Care, which operates more than 90 nursing and senior care homes in Illinois, Iowa and Missouri, filed for bankruptcy in March, estimating it had nearly \$300 million in debt. A federal bankruptcy judge approved a plan last week for the company to borrow \$45 million to keep operating throughout bankruptcy proceedings.

Petersen plans to sell off its assets this summer, according to the company's proposed timeline. Whether the homes remain open beyond that will be up to the winning bidder.

Petersen is far from the only nursing home operator to face bankruptcy; according to a new report from national law firm Polsinelli, health care companies' levels of real estate distress—a term for properties on the brink of or already in foreclosure—is the highest it's been in 15 years. The report noted significant distress in nursing homes in particular.

See **NURSING HOMES**, Page 13

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•Nursing homes (Continued from page 12)

The Freedmans said it's scary to look around their industry and see operators they admired having to close their facilities. They told Capitol News Illinois they worry about the possibility of facing that outcome themselves.

Sam Freedman, Accolade's CFO, said federal stimulus money during the pandemic "kind of bridged the gap" between losses and an increase in Illinois' Medicaid reimbursement rate the General Assembly approved in 2022. "The increased rate really helped us get over the hump once that (stimulus) money started running out," he said. "It's not helping us, you know, be profitable, but it's helping us survive."

The \$700 million increase in funding for nursing home staffing came after two years of negotiating with the industry. Matt Pickering, executive director of the for-profit nursing home advocacy group Health Care Council of Illinois, pointed to the state's years of depressed Medicaid reimbursement rates before the 2022 increase, which he said in a recent interview represented a 12 percent increase — but only "brings us up to 2017 costs."

"Even though we got that increase, we are still well underwater," he said. "We're not ungrateful. But we're still scrambling."

The law also included \$83 million to help long-term care providers launch recruitment efforts with an apprenticeship model.

But operators say it's not nearly enough to stem the bleeding in their staffing levels.

Accolade has set up its own CNA "school," in which CNAs are pre-hired as "auxiliary aides" and do weeks of classroom and clinical work

at two of its locations. While the setup has helped Accolade wean itself off depending on agency CNAs, except in rural areas, Moe Freedman said the state has lagged on paying for the CNA incentive program by about six months.

"We are compensating CNAs at a rate that is not really appropriate for the Medicaid reimbursement rate," he said. "But we are anticipating this revenue source that (the state) promised us and they continuously drag out that reimbursement."

But with a tight budget year, leaders in the General Assembly can't promise a huge windfall for the struggling industry. House Majority Leader Robyn Gabel, D-Evanston, who leads a working group on Medicaid issues, told Capitol News Illinois the industry asked for \$75 million to make up for increased property taxes, which the state had at one time subsidized.

But in the waning days of legislative session, Gabel said the working group is still exploring ways to help the industry but was explicit that General Assembly can't give the industry anywhere near the \$75 million it requested.

"You know, last year we gave just about every sector a rate increase," she said. "Did we give them what they wanted? No; we probably cut every request in half. And it

still added up to a billion dollars...It was like a huge, huge increase. So this year, we've really tried to rein back and just not do those kinds of rate increases."

Gov. JB Pritzker last summer used his power of amendatory veto to nix a provision in a broader property tax bill that would have brought property taxes for nursing homes in Cook County in line with those for other residential health care settings. The industry claimed it would have provided "critical relief" to 300 nursing homes in Cook County.

But Pritzker disagreed, siding with local mayors who complained the resulting shift in property tax burden would especially hurt municipalities in Chicago's south suburbs. Despite the General Assembly's unanimous support on the original bill, lawmakers declined to override the governor during their fall veto session, and Gabel indicated the issue wouldn't be taken up again "in that way."

Minimum staffing rule

The industry is also fearful a new federal rule designed to implement minimum staffing ratios will have the unintended effect of further closures.

More than two years after announcing a plan to set mandatory staffing minimums at skilled nursing facilities,

President Joe Biden's administration last month implemented a new rule to phase in those minimums over the next five years.

Organized labor, including caregiving juggernaut Service Employees International Union, supported the rule, which will require skilled nursing facilities provide residents with a minimum 3.48 hours of nursing care per day, including at least 33 minutes of care from a registered nurse and nearly 2 1/2 hours of care from a nurse's aide. Additionally, the rule will require facilities have a registered nurse on site at all times.

In a statement after the rule was finalized, Katie Smith Sloan, president and CEO of nonprofit nursing home industry group LeadingAge, pointed out that "schools are not graduating enough nurses" to fill either currently open positions or those projected to

open in the future. She added that registered nurses, or RNs, are leaving the workforce, and those who are staying are "typically choosing to work in environments that are not long-term care."

"How can providers hire more RNs when they do not exist?" she said in a statement.

After the Biden administration released its proposed rule in September, a KFF analysis found that fewer than one in five nursing homes nationwide would be able to meet the staffing minimums outlined in the rule without having to hire more staff.

Gabel said she was attempting to address staffing issues by sponsoring a measure that would allow CNAs to dispense some medications in order to free up RNs to provide more care. She shepherded Senate Bill 774 through a House committee earlier this

month, despite pushback from several groups that represent nurses, and it awaits a vote in the full chamber. It previously passed the Senate with only one vote against it.

Syverson, who's long been involved in nursing home issues, blamed Democrats for prioritizing funding for Medicaid-style health care for noncitizens—a pair of recent programs that could cost nearly \$700 million in the current fiscal year — and mandating that insurers cover an increasing roster of procedures.

But, Gabel said, the state can only do so much when the entire nursing home industry is up against trends that have been festering for years.

"I mean, there are nursing homes closing," she said. "And, you know, it's just possible that there aren't enough people to fill the beds... There's nothing I can do about that business model."

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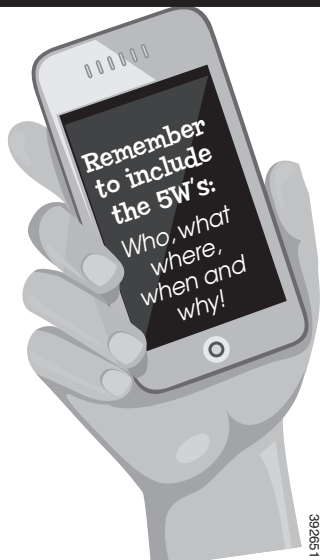
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LEGAL NOTICES

STATE OF ILLINOIS IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT STEPHENSON COUNTY - IN PROBATE

In Re the Matter of
the Estate of:
ANNE V. BUSHELLE
Deceased.

No. 24-PR-35 NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

Notice is given of the
death of Anne V. Bushelle,
of Freeport, Illinois. An
Order was entered May 7,
2024, admitting the Will of
the decedent and dated July
19, 1993, issuing Letters of
Office as described herein.
Letters of Office were issued
on May 7, 2024, to:

Victoria A. Bushelle
600 SW 37th St.
Moore, OK 73160

as independent Executor

of the Estate of Anne V.
Bushelle, whose attorney
is:

Anthony V. Coon
Attorney At Law
10 N. Galena Ave.,
Ste. 210

Freeport, Illinois 61032

Notice is given to persons
who are heirs or legatees
in the above proceeding to
probate a Will whose name
or address is not stated in
the Petition to Admit the
Will to Probate. That an
Order was entered by the
Court on May 7, 2024, admitting the Will to probate.

That on or before July 5,
2024, you may file a petition with the Court to require proof of the Will by testimony of the witnesses to the Will in open Court or other evidence as provided in Section 5/6-21 of the Probate Act of 1975. (755 ILCS 5/6-21).

You also have the right

under Section 5/8-1 of the
Probate Act of 1975 (755
ILCS 5/8-1) to contest the
validity of the Will by
filing a Petition with the
Court on or before November
25, 2024.

Claims against the estate
may be filed in the office
of the Clerk of the Court
at the Stephenson County
Courthouse, 15 N. Galena
Avenue, Freeport, Illinois
61032, or with the
representative, or both, on
or before November 25,
2024, and any claim not
filed on or before said date
is barred. Copies of a claim
filed with the Clerk must
be mailed or delivered to
the representative and to
the attorney within ten (10)
days after it has been filed.

Anthony V. Coon,
#6269568
Attorney at Law
10 N. Galena Ave., Ste 210
Freeport, IL 61032

815/235-2212
Fax 815-232-5500
tonycoonlaw@aol.com
(Published in
The Shopper's Guide
May 15, 22 & 29, 2024)
455534

STATE OF ILLINOIS IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT JO DAVIESS COUNTY- IN PROBATE

In Re the Matter
of the Estate of:
ESTHER E. HUIZENGA,
A/K/A ESTHER O.
HUIZENGA,
Deceased.

No. 24-PR24

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION - CLAIMS

Notice is given of the
death of Esther E. Huizenga,
a/k/a Esther O. Huizenga,
of Apple River, Jo Daviess
County, Illinois. Letters of
Office were issued on May
9, 2024, to:

Susan M. Huizenga
15366 Grebe St.
Bennington, NE 68007
as independent Executor of
the Estate of Esther E. Huizenga,
a/k/a Esther O. Huizenga,
whose attorney is
Anthony V. Coon
Attorney At Law
10 N. Galena Ave.,
Ste. 210

Freeport, Illinois 61032
The estate will be administered
without Court supervision
unless, under Section 28.4 of
the Probate Act (755 ILCS
5/28-4), any interested person
terminates independent
administration at any time
by mailing or delivering a
Petition To Terminate to
the Clerk.

Claims against the estate
may be filed in the office
of the Clerk of the Court

at the JoDavieess County
Courthouse, 330 N. Bench
St., Galena, Illinois 61036,
or with the representative,
or both, on or before November
25, 2024, and any claim
not filed on or before said
date is barred. Copies of a
claim filed with the Clerk
must be mailed or delivered
to the representative and to
the attorney within ten (10)
days after it has been filed.

Date: May 13, 2024.

Susan M. Huizenga,
Executor

By: **Anthony V. Coon**
Anthony V. Coon,
Attorney At Law

Anthony V. Coon,
#6269568
Attorney at Law
10 N. Galena Ave.,
Ste. 210
Freeport, IL 61032
815-235-2212
Fax 815-232-5500
tonycoonlaw@aol.com

(Published in
The Shopper's Guide
May 22, 29, June 5, 2024)
455700

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON ROAD DISTRICT BUDGET

Notice is hereby given
that a Tentative Budget
and Appropriation Ordinance
for Road Purposes of the
Township of Rush, in the
County of Jo Daviess, State
of Illinois, for the fiscal
year beginning April 1,
2024, and ending March
31, 2025, will be on file
and conveniently available
to public inspection by
appointment at the office
of Garrett Toay, Township
Supervisor, 115 W Main
St, Warren, IL 61087, on
or after 8:00 AM on May
1, 2024.

Notice is further given
hereby that a public hearing
on said Budget and

Appropriation Ordinance
will be held at 7:00 PM on
Tuesday, June 11, 2024 at
the Rush Town Hall, 2999
North Canyon Park Road,
Stockton, IL 61085, and
that final hearing and action
on this ordinance will be
taken at this time.

Ben Wooden, Town Clerk
(Published in
The Scoop Today
May 29, 2024)
456152

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON TOWNSHIP BUDGET

Notice is hereby given
that a Tentative Budget and
Appropriation Ordinance
for the Township of Rush,
in the County of Jo Daviess,
State of Illinois, for the
fiscal year beginning April
1, 2024, and ending March
31, 2025, will be on file
and conveniently available
to public inspection by
appointment at the office
of Garrett Toay, Township
Supervisor, 115 W Main
St, Warren, IL 61087, on
or after 8:00 AM on May
1, 2024.

Notice is further given
hereby that a public hearing
on said Budget and
Appropriation Ordinance
will be held at 7:00 PM on
Tuesday, June 11, 2024 at
the Rush Town Hall, 2999
North Canyon Park Road,
Stockton, IL 61085, and
that final hearing and action
on this ordinance will be
taken at this time.

Garrett Toay, Supervisor
Ben Wooden, Town Clerk
(Published in
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On May 22, 2024, Stefevon Tripplett was served with a three-count grand jury indictment for the offense of First-Degree Murder stemming from an extensive investigation into a shooting incident that occurred on May 15, 2021.

On that date, Officers were called to the intersection of Frank Street and State Avenue at 1:43 p.m. When Officers arrived on scene, they discovered an unresponsive 19-year-old male victim inside of a vehicle who had been shot multiple times. The

victim was taken to FHN Hospital and later died as a result of being shot.

Stefevon Tripplett had already been incarcerated at the Stephenson County Jail for unrelated charges. He was served with the indictment and left in the custody of the Stephenson County Sheriff's Office.

The public is reminded that the defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial, at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Rock Valley Publishing

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Potawatomi land transfer advances in Illinois House

Concerns remain over group's plans for the area

By Peter Hancock
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

A bill that would help the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation expand their newly established reservation in DeKalb County advanced out of a state House committee May 21, despite concerns about the tribe's long-term

plans for the property. House Bill 4718 would authorize the state to hand over what is now Shabbona Lake and State Park to the tribe for \$1. It also allows the tribe and the Department of Natural Resources to enter into a land management agreement under which the land would remain open to the public for recreational use for an unspecified period.

The bill is part of a larger effort by the Potawatomi to reclaim land that many historians and legal experts now agree was illegally tak-

en from them in the mid-19th century. Since then, the tribe has been headquartered in northeast Kansas, but it has spent much of the last 20 years trying to reestablish a reservation on land it once owned in Illinois.

Those efforts came to fruition in April when the U.S. Department of the Interior agreed to place into trust 130 acres the tribe had purchased in DeKalb County, making it the only federally recognized tribal land in Illinois.

The proposed transfer of Shabbona Lake and State

Park would add greatly to the acreage the tribe has acquired so far, and that land presumably would become eligible for inclusion in the new reservation. But some homeowners in the area who've become accustomed to living next to a state park say they're nervous about the kind of changes their new tribal neighbors could bring to the area.

"A casino. I mean obviously, we've all had that conversation," Becky Oest, whose family owns a home on property adjacent to the

newly designated reservation, told the House Executive Committee.

The Prairie Band Potawatomi currently operate a hotel and casino complex on their reservation just north of Topeka, Kansas. But tribal chairman Joseph "Zeke" Rupnick assured the House committee the tribe has no such plans for the property in Illinois.

"That has not been our intention," Rupnick said. "Thirty years ago, when there was no gaming in Illinois, we definitely pushed in

that direction. Today, we're just trying to make sure that we get the land secure."

Rupnick insisted the tribe's immediate plans are to work with IDNR to keep the property open for public recreation. But some Republicans on the committee questioned why, if the bill becomes law, the state should continue to pay for operation of parkland that it would no longer own.

The bill passed out of the committee on an 8-4 partisan vote. It now awaits final action in the House and Senate.

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