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YOUR FREE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 22, 2025

## Orangeville students get creative



Orangeville Elementary students in Mrs. Lorig's first grade participate in a STEM challenge in which they had to design an umbrella that could stand up to wind. Students then had a contest to see who could be the last one standing. They then revised the design and tried a second time.

ORANGEVILLE UCSD #203 FACEBOOK PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

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# Illinoisans may be able to file federal taxes for free; state announces Apple ID licenses

## Pritzker announces state's participation in federal Direct File program

### CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

Many Illinois residents will be able to use the IRS Direct File service to electronically prepare and file their 2024 federal tax returns for free.

Almost 2 million eligible Illinois taxpayers will be able to use Direct File starting Jan. 27. Gov. J.B. Pritzker said this service will "put money typically spent on tax preparation services back into the pockets of hardworking families across Illinois."

After users file their federal taxes, Direct File will connect user to MyTax Illinois, Illinois' free state income tax filing system where they can file their Illinois state returns. The program is accessible on mobile phones, laptops, tablets or desktop computers and users will have access to help through a chatbot in both English and Spanish.

"We understand that a significant amount of time and money is spent every year to ensure personal income tax returns are filed accurately and on time," said Illinois Department of Revenue Director David Harris. "This integration will help relieve stress and financial burden

for taxpayers."

The IRS created Direct File as a result of the Inflation Reduction Act, which was signed in 2022 by President Joe Biden. It began as a test program in 2024 and will become permanent in 25 states this year. The IRS estimates that over 30 million taxpayers will be eligible for Direct File in 2025.

To check eligibility and to use the service, visit <https://www.irs.gov/filing/irs-direct-file-for-free>. Individuals may not qualify if they:

- Have unreported cash income, such as tips or alimony.
- Have income from sources such as gig work that's reported on other tax forms.
- Have added or used money from a Medical Savings Account.
- Have taken distributions from employer-sponsored retirement plans, like a 401(k), pension, annuity, 403(b), or governmental 457(b).
- Have made contributions to or taken distributions from an IRA.
- Exceed \$200,000 in wages (or \$168,600 if they had more than one employer).

• File as Married Filing Jointly, and their spouse's wages exceed \$200,000 (or \$168,600 if the spouse had more than one employer).

• File as Married Filing Jointly, and have combined wages exceeding \$250,000.

• File as Married Filing Separately, and wages exceed \$125,000.

• Claim additional tax credits for college tuition or other higher education expenses, energy efficient home updates or adoption expenses.

• Take itemized deductions.

### Mobile driver's licenses and state ID's

Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias says he hopes to bring mobile driver's licenses and state IDs to iPhones by the end of the year.

Giannoulias has announced that his office has officially started working with Apple to allow users to access their driver's licenses and state IDs digitally on their iPhone or Apple Watch. He said in a news release he expects to expand these features to the future for additional digital wallets, such as Google Wallet for Android users.

Lawmakers passed House Bill 4592 last spring, allowing the secretary of state to issue mobile IDs and driver's licenses. When it rolls out, Illinois will be the 11<sup>th</sup> state to adopt mobile IDs.

But a mobile driver's license and ID would not replace physical cards.

The cards would be issued "in addition to, and not instead of" a physical ID, under the law. The law allows agencies and private entities to choose if they want to accept electronic IDs in place of physical ones, but "upon request by law enforcement,

a credential holder must provide the credential holder's physical credential."

The secretary of state's office has a sign-up page for Illinois residents to receive updates about the program, including when mobile IDs become available for iPhone users.

The move toward digital IDs is part of Giannoulias' "commitment to modernizing the office," according to his office.

### Nursing home protections

State lawmakers have approved a bill aimed at protecting nursing home residents from retaliation if they report violations at the facility.

House Bill 2474 aims to prohibit nursing home staff from taking "retaliatory actions" against residents who engage in protected activities, such as speaking out about rule or law violations in their facilities.

The bill specifically protects residents who: talk to a supervisor of the facility, the public, or to an outside authority about a rule or law being broken by the facility staff; give information or testimony during an investigation of a facility; or seek help to leave the facility. It gives residents a private right to sue if they believe the facility broke the law.

The bill would also require nursing home facilities to file any resident complaints that they've been improperly retaliated against with the Illinois Department of Public Health and to give a brief description of any complaints filed to the resident's next of kin once a year.

The measure passed 48-2 in the Senate and 89-16 in the House.

## Church news

### Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

All are invited to worship at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 118 E. Mason St. Lena, IL. Join on Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025, for Worship Service at 9:30 a.m. This will be the Third Sunday of Epiphany. This week's gospel reading is from the Gospel Luke 4:14-21.

On Wednesday, Jan. 29, The Peace Corps Quilting group will meet from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. All are welcome to join and no quilting experience necessary.

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 the third Sunday after Epiphany at worship on Sunday, Jan. 26 at 9 a.m. There will be a Children's Message during the service and our Annual Congregational meeting after the service.

Everyone is welcome to come play cards and dominoes on Thursday, Jan. 23 at 1 p.m. and to play dominoes on Tuesday, Feb. 4 at 9 a.m.

All kids in grades K-5 are welcome to come to St. John's in Pearl City on Wednesday, Feb. 16 from 3:15 p.m. to 5 p.m. to be a part of the Kids Klub. All children in the Pearl City community are welcome to come. For more information or to register your child, please contact Pastor Roger Bronkema at [rbronkema18@gmail.com](mailto:rbronkema18@gmail.com) or call 815-291-6261.

The February Grace Meal will be on Sunday, Feb. 16. The menu is unknown at this time, but reservations are due in the church office by Thursday, Feb. 13. Meals can be picked up at the church on Feb. 16 between 11 a.m. and 12 p.m. If you are interested in donating to this ministry, reach out to the church office for more information. The next

Men's Breakfast will be on Wednesday, Feb. 5 at 7:30 a.m. at the Beltline Restaurant in Freeport.

The Healthy Wolves group will be packing backpacks on Thursday, Jan. 23 at 3:15 p.m. If you are interested in donating to this ministry, reach out to the church office for more information.

Come join the Pearl City Historical Society for a meeting and presentation on Wednesday, Jan. 15 at 6 p.m. in Luther Hall.

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 for a service led by Pastor Christopher Ham at Salem United Church of Christ, 8491 West Salem Road, Lena, IL, every Sunday at 10 a.m. Sunday School for children five years and older is held during church service, and nursery is available for children under five years.

The Wednesday Breakfast Bunch will be meeting Jan. 22 at 8 a.m. at Big Apple Family Restaurant, 1427 W Galena Ave, Freeport, IL. Everyone is welcome to attend.

On Feb. 9 we will be hosting a noisy bucket collection to benefit the Lena Food Pantry with a SOUPer Bowl lunch immediately after services. There will be several soups and sides to enjoy. Make sure to bring your spare change and a big appetite.

Afternoon will be held on Feb. 9 from 4 p.m. until 7 p.m. in the lower level of the church. This space is handicap accessible, and all are welcome to join. During this event, we enjoy snacks, crafting and good company. There is plenty of space to spread out a large project, or to work on something small.

For more information on any Salem related items, you can contact 815-369-4511 or [ruth.dake@gmail.com](mailto:ruth.dake@gmail.com).

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## News briefs

### Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance program

Presenter Vic Berardi, founder of the all-volunteer Illinois Beach State Park Hawkwatch and well-known raptor photographer, will discuss wintering raptors on Illinois and Wisconsin on Feb. 4, 2025, at 7 p.m. The event will be held at St. John United Church of Christ, Freeport, IL. Emphasis will be raptor descriptions and possible lo-

cations to find these birds in the winter months.

### Lena-Winslow Annual Spelling Bee

The Lena-Winslow Annual Spelling Bee will take place on Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025. The Spelling Bee competition will take place at 9 a.m. in the Lena-Winslow Elementary cafeteria for students in grades four through eight with a snow date set for Jan. 31. The top two winners

of this event will advance to the Regional Spelling Bee on Feb. 11, 2025.

### Salvation Army

The Salvation Army will host a Clothing and Coat Giveaway. The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Jan. 28, Jan. 30, and Feb. 1. The Salvation Army is located at 106 W. Exchange, Freeport, IL (across from the courthouse). Please contact 815-235-7639 with any ques-

tions.

In addition to the clothing drive, the Salvation Army will host Family Night. The night will include a dinner and movie on Jan. 25 at 5 p.m. and will feature Lady and the Tramp with spaghetti.

The Salvation Army 2025 Christmas Campaign continues until Jan. 31. The organization is in need of monetary donations to best serve the four Northwest Counties of Illinois.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

## Little Blackhawks

Pictured are Stockton Elementary's Little Blackhawks for the week. These students were recognized for following the Blackhawk Way.

## Around the Northern Hills with Annette Eggers

We all know how important that agriculture is to our county, but do you know some of the statistics that support that? According to the Census of Agriculture, Jo Daviess County has 935 farms with an average farm size of 291 acres. Some of the statistics that stand out that helps make Jo Daviess County unique are listed below.

- Here's a few of the categories that Jo Daviess County ranks high in the state:
- First in the state for production of forages.
- Second for production of oats.
- Fourth in the numbers of acres of corn for silage.
- Second in the total number of cattle and calves.
- Eleventh in the total number of sheep and lambs.
- First in duck production.
- Sixteenth in the number of horses and ponies.



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

vocational or an agriculture related course of study. The are awarded on the basis of exceptional scholastic ability.

All applicants must meet these eligibility guidelines:

1. Must be a Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau member, spouse of member or member's child.
2. Must be accepted for enrollment or be enrolled at an accredited college, university, community college or vocational/technical school.
3. Must be majoring in agriculture or an ag-related study.
4. Must exhibit potential for successful completion of study.

General Scholarship applications must have successfully completed 12 college credits and be enrolled as a full-time student (up to two \$500 scholarships will be awarded). Highland Community College applicants do not have to have any college credits completed to apply for the scholarship (up to two \$500 scholarships will be awarded).

A copy of the application can be found at [www.jodaviesscfb.com](http://www.jodaviesscfb.com). Click on the foundation tab to find the link to the application.

<https://www.iaafoundation.org/>.

### IAA Foundation scholarships

The IAA Foundation just announced the lineup for the 2025 IAA Foundation Scholarships. This includes 120 scholarships totaling \$210,251. We have had several winners from Jo Daviess County in the past, so I would encourage anyone interested to not miss this great opportunity. The link is on the IAA Foundation website.

### Farm Fun Fact

My farm fact is more spring related this week. Spring can't come soon enough! Every baseball requires 150 yards of wool.



**Chris Folmar**  
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# OPINION



## In my opinion

# Pharmacy benefit managers create crisis in patient care that demands immediate action

By Garth Reynolds

The pharmacy profession is under siege. Community pharmacies (independent and chain) are closing at an alarming rate, leaving countless communities without access to essential medications and care.

The culprits behind this crisis are pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), whose opaque and predatory practices are decimating the very foundation of our health care system.

A recent Health Affairs study revealed that nearly 30

percent of U.S. pharmacies have closed since 2010, with closures disproportionately affecting rural, urban, and underserved communities. Illinois has seen this crisis firsthand (more than 80 pharmacy closures just in 2024), with closures leaving countless residents in "pharmacy deserts," where access to medications, vaccinations, and chronic disease management is severely limited; particularly in minority neighborhoods, exacerbating health care disparities and leaving vulnerable populations stranded without necessary pharmaceutical services.

The situation is dire. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has intensified its investigation into PBM practices, acknowledging their anti-competitive behaviors that harm consumers and drive pharmacies out of business. The Illinois Auditor General's report provides a damning critique of PBM management of Medicaid dollars (\$200 million in just 2 years), revealing waste, inefficiency, and inflated costs to taxpayers.



Garth Reynolds

Attorney General Kwame Raoul has taken decisive action, filing lawsuits against PBMs for deceptive practices and antitrust violations (more than \$100 million in settlements). These steps, while commendable, are insufficient to stem the tide of pharmacy closures and the resulting health care crisis.

Medicaid programs are particularly susceptible to PBM exploitation. Through a lack of transparency, PBMs siphon funds intended to support patients and providers, forcing pharmacies to operate at a loss for Medicaid prescriptions.

This financial strain leads to closures, leaving patients in underserved areas with fewer care options. Commercial insurance is not immune; PBMs leverage their market dominance to eliminate competition, prioritize their own services, and restrict patient choice.

## Slices of life

# Favorite time of the day

I woke up much too early this morning and I had trouble getting back to sleep, which could be troublesome to some.

But my covers were cozy. My pillow felt cool and comfortable under my head. There was a kitty nestled in close to me. I nuzzled in, knowing I'd go back to sleep at some point and thought:

"This might be my favorite time of day - waking up and knowing I can still take another few moments to cuddle and fall back asleep."

After a couple hours of extra and wonderful sleep (which some might call an early morning nap), I woke again and it was still early. I thought about the things I wanted to accomplish during the upcoming day and was grateful for that purpose to my life and thought:

"This might be my favorite time of day - thinking about all the things I want to accomplish today."

I prepped the morning coffee and did a little clean-up effort to the kitchen as I waited for it to brew. Coffee scent filled the air and I thought:

"This might be my favorite time of day—waiting for the morning coffee, and smelling it as it brews."

I sat down to check morning emails and watch a bit of the news and thought:

"This quiet morning time might be my favorite time of the day. Time to check in with reality and contemplate the day at hand. Well, that and do the Wordle. Let's not forget the Wordle."

Next on the docket was a walk with a friend. This activity checked multiple boxes: exercise, conversation and solving all the problems of the world - all within the scope of about an hour.

As I chatted with my friend (let's call her, 'Nancy') I thought to myself, "This might must be my favorite time of the day, walking with a good friend."

Next came lunch. Okay, there are no surprises here, are there. I'm pretty sure lunch qualifies as just about everyone's favorite time of the day.

Well, except for nap time, which I wasn't able to fit



By JILL PERTLER  
Columnist

into the day in question, but naps are wonderful and certainly contribute to a best time of day vibe. Any day that I get a nap is probably a pretty relaxed day and that makes it a good day.

After non-nap time my daughter (or son) called—take your pick. I'm always grateful to hear their voice. When they ask me for advice that's only a bonus. When I get to talk to grand babies, it's a double bonus.

Today was a double (and FaceTime) bonus and as I smiled seeing their faces and hearing their voices, I realized, "This is probably my one of my favorite times of day."

After dinner (I'm skipping that because it's right up there with lunch for the favorite time of day) I met a friend for a glass of wine. As we sat, chatting and sharing deep, philosophical thoughts (wine will do that to you) I thought to myself, "This is probably my favorite time of day, because..." (Well, you know the drill.)

The sun set, the moon rose and stars filled the night sky. I arrived home and looked upward, and felt at peace with the world. I inhaled deeply and thought, "This is definitely my favorite time of day."

Night had descended. The day was done. It was late and time for bed. I laid my head on the cool and comfy pillow. My kitty found her spot beside me and quickly commenced purring. As I drifted off to sleep I was filled with happy memories of days gone by and thought, "This just might be my most favorite time of day."

And it was. They all were. They all are. And tomorrow they probably will be as well.

I hope the same, for you.

*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.*

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The Scoop and Shopper's Guide

# Blackhawks defeat Warren and East Dubuque home matchups

By Trenten Scheidegger  
CORRESPONDENT

The Stockton Blackhawks won their fifteenth win of the 2024-2025 girls basketball season when they picked up victories over Warren and East Dubuque last week. Stockton came into the week with an overall record of 13-5. They were riding a four-game winning streak, including an intense 55-53 victory over Black Hawk. Outside of that nail-biter, Stockton was dominating the competition. In the first three games of their most recent winning streak, the Blackhawks outscored their opponents 135-46.

Their Jan. 10 battle against Black Hawk would prepare them for the next week of games. Stockton played host to a few tough opponents in the Warren Warriors, the East Dubuque Warriors, and the Pecatonica Indians last week.

Stockton made quick work of Warren on Jan. 14. The Blackhawks came out firing as they put up 23 points in the very first quarter. Warren got off to a slow start with just five points on their end.

The Warriors would close the gap in the second quarter. Warren, led by Mayci Mullen and Lizzy Hartzell, would cut Stockton's lead down to just ten points at the half. After holding an 18-point advantage at the end of

the first, Stockton went into halftime leading 30-20.

Warren continued to hold the momentum in the second half. They set things up for an exciting finish when they outscored Stockton 11-5 in the third quarter. In a game that appeared to be out of reach, the Warriors found themselves trailing just 36-31 heading into the final quarter.

The fourth quarter is where good teams set themselves apart from the rest, and that is just what Stockton did. After watching their lead dwindle away, the Blackhawks stepped up when they had to. They outscored Warren 18-7 in the fourth, clinching a 52-39 victory.

Madie Mammoser led all scorers with 20 points. Dylann Broshous was next up for Stockton with 15. Emma Eisfeller added 11 as the Blackhawks had three players finish in double figures. Mullen led Warren with 15 points, while Hartzell added 10 in the loss.

Just two days later, the Blackhawks found themselves in another tough spot as they played host to East Dubuque in a playoff-like matchup. East Dubuque came to Stockton with an overall record of 11-6. They were fresh off heartbreaking 61-60 overtime loss to the River Ridge-Scales Mound Wildcats. They took Stockton down to the wire.

The first half didn't feature much offense. It was a defensive battle, but Stockton took a slim 14-11 lead into the halftime break. After the slow start, both offenses came out firing in the second half. It was East Dubuque who had the hot hand, however. The Warriors outscored Stockton 19-10 in a third quarter that saw the momentum shift.

Entering the final quarter, Stockton was trailing by a score of 30-24. Once again, they had another opportunity to make a fourth quarter statement. They did just that, by outscoring the Warriors 17-7 in an electrifying final quarter.

Mammoser is as consistent as they come, and she was key in the comeback victory as she led Stockton with 19 points. Ireland Mensendike and Kaydra Wright each finished with seven as Stockton came back to win by a score of 41-37.

Stockton closed the week by playing host to one of the top 1A teams in all of Illinois in the Pecatonica Indians. Stockton quickly fell behind as they eventually lost to Pecatonica 48-23. Mammoser had seven points in the loss. Stockton's record dropped to 15-6 on the year.

Stockton is set to return home on Friday, Jan. 24 to play host to River Ridge-Scales Mound. That game is set to tip off at 7:30 p.m.

# River Ridge Honor Roll

## Middle School 2nd Quarter Honor Roll

**4.00+ Sam Cobine, Brogan Grube, Sophia Martinez, Matthew Butcher, Layna Kretschmer, Emmett Patterson**

**3.50 - 3.999 Frida Carriaga, Luke Holcomb, Frances Howard, Morgan Kloss, Christian Morhardt, Emmy Tiedt, Lucas Wurster, Chloe Cross, Lily Engle, Aniah Havens-Hudson, Ava Huett, Averie Karberg, Skye McLane, Alaina Parisi, Brogann Peugh, Mesa Whitmer, Liam Boop, Megan Bradt, Anna Dittmar, Jay Fitzgerald, Julia Gerlich, Brigson Grube, Piper Havens, Dixi Palas, Landen Sether**

**3.00 - 3.499 Natalie Haas, Cruz Jimenez, Brock Turner, Lemma Bird, Summer Goebel, Nevaeh Rodriguez, Dallas Wilbanks, Leighton Wurster, Ayden Chambers, Rylee Hendrickson, Franyelis Perez Silva, Bradley Velazquez**

## High School 2nd Quarter Honor Roll

**4.00+ Kathryn Cobine, Brynn Fry, Aizlynn Griffiths, Laiken Haas, Nathan Haas, Lucius Mendenhall, Graci Vanderheyden, Elaina Doms, Sawyer Fry, Jaime Miller, Harmony Packard, Kaci Patterson, Samuel Rife, Gracie Schnitzler, Sarah Winter, Nicholas Cobine, Ella Dittmar, Evalynn Doms, Lane Groezinger, Elizabeth Rife**

**3.50 - 3.999 Kayla Diehl, Camden Flack, Isabella Haring, Iisa Malmberg, Mason Smith, Ian Wachter, Joseph Winter, Brook Bradbury, Sophie Grissinger, Ava Ketelsen, Janna Barrett, Kaden Bauer, Piper Golden, Jackson Goldsmith, Genevieve Kidwell, Isabella Wasmund, Carson Dodd, Wesley Haas, Amber Schlarman, Ashlynn Wasmund**

Schlarman, Ashlynn Wasmund

**3.00 - 3.499 David Buck, Kelly Chapman, Jala Haberman, Zoey Chapman, Joseph DuBord, Thomas Harms, Matthew Ransom, Leah Spahn, Hamish Boden, Natalie Keleher, Kenley Patterson, Alejandra Velazquez, Bria Andrade, Angelina Cruz, Russell Howard, Dalton Kloss, Wyatt Lehman, Jason Lucas, Alice McGovern, Wyatt Ritchie, Breck Roche, Alexa Rolwes**

## High School Semester 1 Honor Roll

**4.00+ Kathryn Cobine, Aizlynn Griffiths, Laiken Haas, Nathan Haas, Lucius Mendenhall, Elaina Doms, Sawyer Fry, Jaime Miller, Harmony Packard, Kaci Patterson, Samuel Rife, Gracie Schnitzler, Sarah Winter, Nicholas Cobine, Evalynn Doms, Lane Groezinger, Elizabeth Rife, Amber Schlarman**

**3.50 - 3.999 Kayla Diehl, Brynn Fry, Isabella Haring, Iisa Malmberg, Mason Smith, Graci Vanderheyden, Ian Wachter, Ava Ketelsen, Leah Spahn, Kaden Bauer, Hamish Boden, Piper Golden, Jackson Goldsmith, Genevieve Kidwell, Isabella Wasmund, Ella Dittmar, Carson Dodd, Bronx Gonzalez, Wesley Haas, Jason Lucas, Wyatt Ritchie, Ashlynn Wasmund**

**3.00 - 3.499 David Buck, Kelly Chapman, Zoe Eisenberg, Camden Flack, Jala Haberman, Wendy Weimerskirch, Joseph Winter, Brook Bradbury, Zoey Chapman, Joseph DuBord, Sophie Grissinger, Thomas Harms, Matthew Ransom, Janna Barrett, Sully Bower, Madilynn Clarkon, Natalie Keleher, Aubree Niccum, Bria Andrade, Angelina Cruz, Clara Gerlich, Russell Howard, Alice McGovern, Alexa Rolwes**

# Jo Daviess County Extension and 4-H Foundation announces scholarships

Jo Daviess County Extension and 4-H Foundation announces the availability of the Ralph & Katherine Norris Scholarship and the Jo Daviess County Association for Home & Community Education Scholarship.

Ralph & Katherine Norris donated funds to provide scholarships for Jo Daviess County residents studying agriculture or related fields.

Scholarships will be awarded to people pursuing a two or four-year degree program as full-time students. Current high school students, college students, and others continuing their education can apply. Applicants must be accepted at a chosen school, college, or university. Past applicants must submit a new application each year. Recipients cannot receive the scholarship for more than

four years.

Jo Daviess County Association for Home & Community Education offers two \$300 scholarships. Applicants must have been a resident of Jo Daviess County for one year and be a high school senior. Applicants must be accepted to an accredited two-year or four-year college.

The application deadline for the Norris scholarship is

March 28, 2025. The deadline for the Jo Daviess County Association for Home & Community Education Scholarship is March 28, 2025. Applications are available at the Jo Daviess County Extension Office at 204 Vine St., Elizabeth or by calling 815-858-2273 to request one. For more information about the scholarships call the Jo Daviess County Extension Office at 815-858-2273.

## Opinion

(Continued from page 4)

Illinois stands at a pivotal moment. We must act decisively to halt this crisis:

**Enforce transparency:** Mandate full disclosure of PBM contracts, including pricing and rebate practices, to ensure accountability for taxpayer dollars and premiums.

**Implement fair reimbursement:** Ensure pharmacy reimbursement reflects the actual cost of medications, preventing PBM manipulation.

**Expand state oversight:** Empower the attorney general and the Departments of Healthcare and Family Services & Insurance to broaden investigations into PBM practices, and

authorize the auditor general to audit PBM contracts for commercial plans (e.g. State Employees Plans).

**Support federal action:** Advocate for federal reforms to restrict PBM abuses nationwide, ensuring consistent standards across state lines.

**Protect independent pharmacies:** Provide immediate financial relief and long-term policy support to preserve their vital role in communities.

The collapse of community pharmacies is a health care emergency. Patients rely on their pharmacists for more than medications; they depend on us for guidance, education, and access to the

health care system. Every pharmacy closure represents a loss for patients and communities.

As executive director of the Illinois Pharmacists Association, I urge state and federal leaders to address this crisis with the urgency it demands. PBMs must be held accountable, and pharmacies must be empowered to provide the care their patients need.

Our profession has stood strong through countless challenges, but the PBM crisis threatens to erode the foundation of pharmacist delivered patient-centered care. It is time to ensure that pharmacies are no longer treated as expendable

casualties in a broken system but rather as vital partners in delivering healthcare to all.

Let's act now—before another pharmacy closure reminds us of what we have lost.

*Garth K. Reynolds, BSPHarm, RPh, MBA, FAPhA, is a practicing community pharmacist and the executive director of the Illinois Pharmacists Association.*



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# Wildcats defeat River Queens at Manny's Shootout

By Trenten Scheidegger  
CORRESPONDENT

The River Ridge-Scales Mound (RR-SM) Wildcats picked up their eighteenth victory of the 2024-2025 girls basketball season when they competed at this year's Manny's Shootout. There, the Wildcats took on the River Queens out of Clinton, Iowa. The River Queens had just four wins when they took on the Wildcats on Jan. 18.

RR-SM made sure the River Queens were going to leave Manny's Shootout with just four wins as well. The Wildcats got off to a very quick start, thanks to some early success from three-point land. Kenley Patterson hit a pair of first quarter threes to help get things going.

RR-SM also attacked the Clinton defense early and often. So much so, that the Wildcats took four separate trips to the free throw line in the first quarter alone. They made sure to take advantage of the opportunities, as they hit seven of their eight free throws in the quarter. Laiken Haas, Berkeley Mensendike, and Sarah Winter each went two-for-two at the line in the first. Halle Wiegel went one-for-two in her trip to the line.

Thanks to the plethora of free throws, the Wildcats started the second quarter with a 17-5 lead. Just when it looked like they were going to run away with another big victory, the offense hit a wall.

Patterson sunk her third three of the night, but RR-SM combined for just seven points in the second quarter. A pair of Haas baskets provided the other four points.

That allowed Clinton to cut into the RR-SM lead as the Wildcats went into the break up 24-14.

Things only got worse for the RR-SM offense in the second half. In the third quarter, the Wildcats had one of their worst offensive quarters of the season. They combined for just two points, which came from a Mensendike basket. Once again, Clinton managed to cut into the lead. At the end of the first quarter, the Wildcats held a massive 17-5 advantage.

After three quarters of play, that advantage had dwindled all the way down to a 26-23 lead for the Wildcats.

That early lead proved crucial in the final outcome. Despite scoring just nine combined points in the second and third quarters, the Wildcats still held onto a slim lead as they went into the fourth quarter.

Fortunately for RR-SM, their offense came back to life in the fourth. Winter hit a pair of baskets to help maintain their lead. Wiegel hit a big three-pointer. Haas converted an and-one opportunity as the Wildcats picked up a 36-34 victory over the River Queens.

Haas led RR-SM in scoring with 11 points. Patterson was next up with nine, all of which came from three-point territory. Mensendike and Winter each finished the game with six points. Winter led the way in rebounds with eight. Haas also had five steals in the victory. With the win, the Wildcats improved to 18-3 on the season. They will be back in action on Jan. 24 when they travel to take on the Stockton Blackhawks.

# Lena-Winslow, Pearl City pick up victories over Orangeville

By Trenten Scheidegger  
CORRESPONDENT

The Orangeville Broncos have battled their way through the 2024-2025 boys basketball season. They didn't pick up their first victory until Dec. 18, when they beat Ashton-Franklin Center 58-47. That improved their record to just 1-8 on the year.

Since then, Orangeville has suffered another seven-game losing streak. That includes a pair of losses against the Lena-Winslow Panthers and the Pearl City Wolves last week.

Lena-Winslow has continued their disciplined ways despite playing under new head coach, Mark Blakely. They came to Orangeville with an overall record of 11-4. Three of those losses came against Dakota, Galena, and Pecatonica; three of the top teams in Northwest Illinois.

Orangeville stood little chance when they played host to the Panthers on Jan. 15. Le-Win had already jumped out to a 22-point advantage before the halftime break. Things didn't get any better after that as Orangeville was held scoreless in the

third quarter.

In the end, the Panthers won by a score of 59-25. Nine different Panthers tallied points on the evening. Miles Mahon led the way with 12 points, while Jaylen Rakowska finished with nine. Luke Madigan and Brady White each finished with seven. Aiden Wild, Michael Mowery, and Cohen Weegens all had six points in the victory.

Hayden Schofield led the Broncos with 10 points, but he was their only player to finish in double figures. Orangeville's next leading scorer was Joe Isenberger with six. Drew Kloeping added three in the loss.

Things didn't get much easier when the Broncos played host to a 10-win Pearl City team just two days later. One of Pearl City's 10 wins came against the Broncos back in mid-December. The Wolves won that game by a score of 66-28.

Their second meeting played out in similar fashion. Pearl City took a commanding advantage as they jumped out to a 13-3 lead to start the game. Pearl City would only expand their lead in the second quarter. The

Wolves combined for 17 points, while Orangeville put up just eight. By the halftime break, Pearl City was already up by a score of 30-11.

Lane Kempel was consistent for the Wolves. He wound up leading the team in scoring with 16 points, including a pair of three-pointers. Tyler Clark added eight points for the Pearl City offense.

Orangeville's Jaxon Grilliot led the Broncos with 11 points, nine of which came from three-point territory. Their next leading scorer was Kloeping with six. Orangeville fell by a final score of 57-23. The loss dropped the Broncos' overall record to 1-15 on the season. They face the toughest test of their season when they play host to the Pecatonica Indians on Thursday, Jan. 23. Pecatonica got off to a 16-0 start to their season.

That same evening, Le-Win faces a tough test of their own. The Panthers will play host to a 12-win Forreton Cardinals squad. Pearl City also has a tough Jan. 23 game as they travel to take on an eight-win River Ridge squad.

# Pearl City defeats Lena-Winslow in NUIC girls basketball matchup

By Trenten Scheidegger  
CORRESPONDENT

The Pearl City Wolves played host to the Lena-Winslow Panthers back on Tuesday, Jan. 14. It was an even matchup on paper as the Wolves came in with a record of 6-14, while the Panthers were 7-12.

Although Le-Win had one more win on their record, they were coming off a disappointing loss to one of Illinois' top teams in the Pecatonica Indians. Pearl City was coming off a dominant 51-29 victory over Christian Life. Not only was Pearl City feeling good

about the win, but they had the privilege of playing on their home court.

The Wolves got off to an electrifying start. Specifically, it was Fallyn Endress who helped Pearl City take an early advantage. Endress found plenty of success from inside to get the game started, but she capped off her first quarter run with a three-pointer. Endress had 12 points in the first as the Wolves took a 17-10 lead over Le-Win.

Kendra Kuhlemeier and Endress each hit three-pointers in the second quarter. The Wolves combined for four three-pointers in the first half alone. Le-Win managed to keep pace in the second quarter. Sophie Johnston hit two three-pointers of her own to help spark some momentum. Ava Vlasin added a three-pointer as the Panthers combined for five first half threes of their own. Still, Le-Win found themselves trailing at the half as Pearl City took a 32-24 lead into a break.

Le-Win would close the

gap in the second half. The Panthers continued to rely on the three-point shot to bring them success. Lila Grindey, Johnston, and Vlasin each hit three-pointers in the third quarter. Racheal Setterstrom also went three-for-four at the free throw line as the Panthers outscored the Wolves 17-12 in the third.

Pearl City's offense slowed down in the second half, but their defensive play was just enough to hold on for the victory. After scoring 32 first half points, the Wolves combined for just 18 points in all of the second half.

Their defense stifled Le-Win's offense in the fourth quarter. After allowing the Panthers to cut into the lead, they shut things down in the final quarter. Le-Win's only fourth quarter points came by way of a Johnston three-pointer. It was her fourth of the night.

Pearl City's offense was held to just six points, but that was all they needed as they picked up a 50-44 victory over Le-Win. Endress led all scorers with 24 points. Tana Gravert was the only other Pearl City player in double figures with 10 points. Le-Win was led by Johnston, who finished with 12 points, all of which came from three-point territory. Grindey added 11 in the loss.

Pearl City would go on to beat Forreton 51-23 in their next game. It was their third consecutive victory. That winning streak was snapped when they fell 44-19 to Amboy on Jan. 18. With that loss, Pearl City's record fell to 8-15 on the year. The Wolves hit the road on Jan. 24 as they take on the Pecatonica Indians. That same evening, the Panthers will make the short trip to take on the Dakota Indians.

## SSM Health at Home offering Grief Support Group

Join SSM Health at Home for "Walking Through Grief," an education and support group providing resources and encouragement for people grieving the death of a loved one. Walking Through Grief is a six-week grief support group open to those ages 18+ who have experienced the death of someone special. Sessions will be held on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. from Feb. 12 to March 19

at Monroe Engraving, 1005 30th Street in Monroe.

Seating is limited, and registration is requested. Attendance at all sessions is highly recommended. There is no charge to attend. Those interested can register for the group online at [ssmhealth.com/classes](http://ssmhealth.com/classes). For more information or to register over the phone, please call SSM Health at Home at 608-324-1143.

## You ought to be in pictures!

**THIS IS AN OPEN CALL FOR SUBMITTED PHOTOS TO BE USED IN YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER**

▼ Community events, car washes, festivals, lemonade stands, school projects - people at work and at play. **We are interested!**

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PHOTOS MAY ALSO APPEAR ON OUR WEB SITE, [rvpnews.com](http://rvpnews.com)

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# Stephenson and Carroll County Farm Bureau news

By Victoria Hansen

On Friday, Jan. 24 the Carroll County Farm Bureau Young Leaders will host their Annual Harvest for All Campaign. For those who may not be familiar with this program, Harvest for All is a program within the Young Leader Committees of Illinois Farm Bureau to combat food insecurity across the state. Each January the Carroll County Farm Bureau Young Leaders collect corn from local farmers, sell it and then donate the proceeds to Carroll County Food pantries.

If you haven't donated in the past and would like to be added to the list please contact Manager, Victoria Hansen at 815-353-9655 or by email at carrollcfb@gmail.com. If you would prefer to make a monetary donation to this program, please mail checks to the Carroll County Farm Bureau, 811 South Clay

Street, Mt. Carroll, IL 61053 by February 14, 2025. Please make checks payable to Carroll County Farm Bureau with a notation that money should be used for Harvest for All.

## Illinois Farm Bureau announces New Farm Bureau Advantage Conference

Gain valuable insight and knowledge on emerging issues in agriculture during Illinois Farm Bureau's first-ever Farm Bureau Advantage conference. The conference, held March 14-15 at the Embassy Suites in East Peoria, seeks to empower IFB members through opportunities to learn, connect with experts and build new relationships. Attendees will hear five keynote presentations from agriculture experts, political strategists and motivational speakers, including Peter

Zeihan, a geopolitical strategist and author. Other speakers include Eric Snodgrass, a principal atmospheric scientist with Conduit Ag; Josh Sundquist, a Paralympic ski racer, author and motivational speaker; and representatives with Illinois Corn, Illinois Soybean Association and the University of Illinois Center for Digital Agriculture.

The conference will open with an evening social event featuring a dueling piano show and opportunities to support the IAA Foundation. A hotel room block is available at the Embassy Suites. For more information or to register visit: <https://www.ilfb.org/get-involved/events/farm-bureau-advantage-conference/>.

## Rules for the Road meeting

The Rules for the Road

Meeting will be held on March 11, 2025. It is hosted by Whiteside County Farm Bureau. This meeting will begin at 8 a.m. at the Sauk Valley Community College Riverview Conference Center, Dixon IL. Learn more about CDL and Trucking Regulations to help you stay legal and safe when you hit the road.

Registration opens on Feb. 1 and can be completed by reaching out to your county Farm Bureau Carroll, 815-244-3001 and Stephenson, 815-232-3186.

## How Farm Bureau served our members in December

More than 1,700 Illinois Farm Bureau Members attended the IAA Annual Meeting. During IFB's grassroots policy development process, delegates debated and approved policy around envi-

ronment domain, renewable energy, nuisance wildlife and more.

IFB leaders traveled to Capitol Hill to advocate for members on economic relief, 45Z guidance, trade markets, ag labor and more. IFB leadership met with federal legislators from Illinois and the ranking members of the

Senate AG Committee, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota.

The IAA Foundation raised \$52,000 through fundraising events during the IAA Annual Meeting. Money raised will support the future of agriculture through scholarships, Ag in the Classroom resources for country Farm Bureaus, and more.

## Pearl City Hornets 4-H Club offers Taco Dinner

Join the Pearl City Hornets 4-H Club for their annual Taco Dinner on Tuesday, Feb. 4, at the Pearl City School Cafeteria from 5 to 7:30 p.m. The dinner includes a choice of three soft shell tacos or nachos with all the fixings, dessert, and drink, for \$7, and a child meal is \$3. Tickets are available at the door. All proceeds benefit the activities and community outreach of the Pearl City Hornets 4-H Club.

Stay after the dinner and cheer on the Pearl City Wolves boys basketball team as they take on the Dakota Indians.

# MOBILE LIFT SALES AND SERVICE LIQUIDATION AUCTION

SATURDAY, JAN. 25 • 9 A.M.  
605 CHIPPEWA ROAD, HARVARD, IL  
IN PERSON PREVIEW: WEDNESDAY, JAN. 22, NOON TO 4 P.M.

### THIS AUCTION IS PACKED WITH TOOLS & EQUIPMENT INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

**FORKLIFTS:** Clark LP 4,000 lb. forklift, Toyota 4,000 lb. with side shift, Spyder forklift with Kubota diesel approx. 12' lift, Spyder forklift with approx 6' lift Onan powered, large selection of forks.

**CRANE:** Brodereson IC-80-ID 8 ton carry deck.

**TRAILERS:** Spyder transport trailer, 6' x 12' 7,000# tilt bed trailer, 6' 8' tilt bed, 8' x 12' homemade trailer.

**WELDERS:** Millermatic wire welder, Lincoln Pro Core 135, Lincoln Pro Mig 135, Lincoln Weld Pak 100 HD.

**TOOLS/EQUIPMENT:** Lowe hydraulic auger with bits and forklift & skid loader mounts, Emglo portable Honda powered compressor, electric/hydraulic pipe bender, power hacksaw, Bridgeport model 110, drill presses, Famco 12 ton ratcheting arbor press, paint shaker, parts washers, Atlas 2 post car lift, AaLadin hot water pressure washer, chain break, Onan generator, numerous DeWalt cordless, Milwaukee power tools, multiple Binks paint guns and equipment, large heavy duty steel fab tables, tool boxes, Coats tire machine.

**SMALL ENGINES/ENGINE PARTS:** 20+ small engines including numerous Onan twin cylinder, numerous Kohler twin cylinder, Honda twin cylinder, Kubota diesels, huge assortment of NEW Onan/Kohler/Kubota small engine parts.

**MISC.:** large selection of hardware, hydraulic hose fittings, chains, chain couplings, electric motors new and used, large flammables cabinets, chains, tie down straps, large selection of wire, HUGE selection of steel stock, heavy duty rolling industrial carts, metal shelving, Lawson parts organizers (loaded), shipping materials, hydraulic cylinders, hydraulic repair kits,

**WHEELS/TIRES:** NEW & USED skid loader/Spyder tires, lawn and garden tires, trailer tires, new and used rims.

**AUCTIONEER'S NOTE:** This is a very partial listing.



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# Budget constraints, caucus tensions face House Speaker Welch in his third term

## Recent caucus erupted into shouting, drawing criticism from governor

By Peter Hancock  
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

When state Rep. Emanuel "Chris" Welch was sworn in for another term as speaker of the Illinois House this month,

he called on his colleagues to "rise to the occasion" and confront the moment that faced them.

"We are all defined by the moments in our lives and by our responses to them," Welch said in his inaugural address. "There are young people here today witnessing a very special moment. How we lead in that moment is so important. What we say in that moment is so important."

In many ways, Welch's political career has been defined by his handling of critical moments. That was especially true in January 2021, when then-Speaker Michael J. Madigan, struggling under the weight of a burgeoning corruption scandal, began losing the grip on the power he had held for most of the previous 40 years.

It was Welch, a Democrat from the western suburb of

Hillside then in his fifth term, who rose from a crowded field of potential contenders to take over one of the most powerful positions in Illinois government.

In a recent statement from his office, Welch pointed to several legislative achievements that occurred during his first four years as speaker—a series of balanced budgets and increases in the state's credit rating; increased funding for K-12 and higher education; promotion of renewable energy; and criminal justice reform measures, to name a few.

But now, as he enters his third term as speaker, Welch and the Democratic caucus he leads face several new challenges, including significant budget constraints and divisions within the caucus itself. Those divisions erupted in a closed-door caucus meeting during the recent lame duck session and spilled over into public view during contentious negotiations over a bill to regulate the hemp industry.

That caucus meeting reportedly included shouting, name-calling and accusations leveled against state agency staff members, leading to open criticisms from Gov. JB Pritzker over Welch's handling of the situation.

During a recent interview with Capitol News Illinois, however, Welch downplayed the significance of those tensions and insisted his relationship with the governor's office remains in good shape.

"Let me say that we had a caucus on a very divisive issue," Welch said. "We've had three caucuses in three different years now on that particular issue, and it gets very emotional. And I have talked to members who, I think, crossed the line and asked them to apologize. And it's my understanding, at least one member has reached out to a staffer and tried to apologize."

As for the governor, Welch said, "our relationship is great."

"I love and respect the governor. In my four years as speaker, we've accomplished some great policy victories," he said. "I've got two more years here as speaker again, thank God, and we're going to land more big policy victories. You know, the governor has a job to do, but I have a job to do too."

One of the most challenging tasks ahead for Welch could be holding the Democratic caucus together on budget and revenue issues during a time when the state faces significant fiscal pressures.

For most of Welch's time in

the speaker's office, Illinois has enjoyed a period of sustained revenue growth. That has enabled lawmakers to fund such popular things as increased school spending, financial aid for college and university students, and expansion of health care coverage under Medicaid.

But revenue growth has been slowing in recent months. During the 2024 regular session, lawmakers struggled to pass a revenue package needed to close a roughly \$1 billion budget gap. Even with Democrats' supermajority in the House, it took three votes on the final night of the session in May to pass a bill that included tax hikes on sportsbooks and businesses.

This year could prove even more challenging as lawmakers face a projected \$3.2 billion budget shortfall. But Welch said he is confident lawmakers will work through the budget challenge.

"I've been speaker four years now. We balanced the budget every year I've been speaker, and some of those years we had very grim forecasts and we still managed to produce budgets with surpluses, make additional payments to our pension obligations and receive credit upgrades," Welch said.

"And I do believe that we're going to continue to pass balanced budgets that are compassionate and responsible, like we've done the last four years that I've been speaker," he added. "You know, I'm looking forward to the next credit upgrade we receive after we do it again."

To help meet the challenge, Welch announced the formation of a new leadership team shortly after being reelected speaker, including the appointment of a new team of lead budget negotiators.

See CAUCUS, Page 11



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# FHN awards four healthcare career scholarships

Four area students have been awarded scholarships to help cover the cost of healthcare education. Again this year, an outstanding group of students submitted applications for the scholarships.

Each student wrote an essay about their career path along with strengths and personal goals to support the healthcare needs of FHN's service area, and the top candidates were selected for face-to-face interviews.

After the interviews, three Healthcare Career Scholarship applicants and one Diversity Healthcare Career Scholarship applicant were chosen to each receive a \$1,000 scholarship. All of FHN's scholarships are funded through donations to the FHN Foundation.

The 2024 Healthcare Career Scholarship winners are:

**Emily Allison** from Ridott, who is pursuing a Physical Therapist Assistant degree at Highland Community College in Freeport with plans to transfer to Blackhawk Technical College or Elgin Community College to finish her degree.

**Abbey Hammer** from Shannon, who is pursuing a Nursing degree at Highland Community College in Freeport.



Left to right: Maddie Obert, FHN Scholarship Committee; Kathy Martinez, FHN COO/CNO; Haley Smith, Emily Allison, Abbey Hammer; Mark Gridley, FHN President and CEO; Carol Boeke, FHN Scholarship Committee; Rilee Smith, FHN Scholarship Committee. Not pictured, Bintou Timbiné.

**Hayley Smith** from Warren, who is pursuing a Doctorate of Pharmacy degree at UW-Madison in Madison,

Wis. The 2024 Diversity Healthcare Career Scholarship winner is **Bintou Timbiné** of

Rockford, who is pursuing a Doctorate of Pharmacy degree at the University of Illinois-Chicago, Rockford Cam-

pus. FHN offers Healthcare Career and Diversity scholarships each year; the applica-

tion period opens early each summer. For more information, visit [www.fhn.org/scholarships](http://www.fhn.org/scholarships).

SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing



## Make Solar Your New Year's Resolution!

Thinking of ways to offset your energy costs in 2025? **Consider going solar!**

Stateline Solar strives to offer renewable energy solutions to homeowners, business owners and those in the agricultural community through personalized solutions for all. Our local, dedicated team is committed to enriching our community and providing top-notch service to all customers. At Stateline Solar, we're more than a company; we're your neighbors committed to making a positive impact.

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The not so skinny cook

Butoni Basil Pesto which is available at Cub Foods.

1 tube (8 oz.) crescent rolls  
3 T. prepared pesto  
½ C. fresh crabmeat  
Preheat the oven to 375. Unroll crescent dough; separate into 8 triangles. Cut each triangle in half lengthwise, forming 2 triangles. Spread ½ t. pesto over each triangle; place 1 rounded t. of crab along the wide end of each triangle. Roll up triangles from the wide ends and place point side down 1 inch apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake until golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes. Serve warm.

## Shredded Kale and Brussels Sprouts Salad

This super food salad has a great honey mustard dressing, but you can use about any vinaigrette dressing to make this salad a great winter green healthy side.

1 small bunch (8 oz.)

stemmed and thinly sliced kale (6 cups)  
½ lb. fresh Brussels sprouts, thinly sliced (3 cups)  
½ C. pistachios, coarsely chopped  
½ C. honey mustard salad dressing  
¼ C. shredded Parmesan cheese

### Dressing:

¼ C. mayonnaise  
1 T. prepared mustard (yellow)  
1 T. honey  
½ T. lemon juice

In a large bowl, combine the kale, Brussels sprouts, and Parmesan cheese. Mix the mayonnaise, prepared mustard, honey and lemon juice in a small bowl. Drizzle on kale mixture and sprinkle with pistachios.

## Cauliflower Casserole

This side is a good one for any meal. It is creamy, cheesy, and has a great crunch too!

1 medium cauliflower, broken into florets  
1 C. sour cream  
1 C. shredded cheddar cheese  
½ C. crushed cornflakes  
¼ C. chopped green pepper  
¼ C. chopped red pepper  
1 t. salt  
¼ C. grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat the oven to 325. Place 1 inch water in a saucepan; add cauliflower. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer until crisp tender, 5 to 10 minutes. Drain. In a large bowl, combine cauliflower, sour cream, cheddar cheese, cornflakes, peppers and salt. Transfer to a greased 2 qt. baking dish. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and paprika. Bake, uncovered, until heated through, 30 to 35 minutes.

## Slow Cooked Beef Tips

This meal is a great one to serve to company or to the

family for a special occasion. It is rich in flavor and makes for a great way to cook all day long. Enjoy this great beef entrée.

¼ lb. sliced baby Portobello mushrooms  
½ small onion, sliced  
1 beef top sirloin steak (½ lb. cubed)  
¼ t. salt  
1/8 t. pepper  
1 t. olive oil  
1 C. beef broth, plus 3 T. beef broth  
1½ t. Worcestershire sauce  
1 T. cornstarch  
2 T. water  
Mashed potatoes, rice or noodles

Place mushrooms and onion in a 3-quart slow cooker. Sprinkle the beef with salt and pepper. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat; brown meat. Transfer to the slow cooker. Add 3 T. beef broth to the skillet, stirring to loosen browned bits from pan. Stir in rest of broth and Worcestershire sauce; pour over meat. Cook covered on Low 6 to 8 hours or until meat is tender. In a small bowl, mix cornstarch and water until smooth; gradually stir into slow cooker. Cook, covered, on high 15 to 30 minutes or until gravy is thickened. Serve over mashed potatoes, rice or noodles.

## Orange Chicken

There are a lot of recipes for this Chinese dish, but one of the best ones is the one served at Panda Express. This recipe is very close to the one they serve.

### Chicken:

1½ C. flour  
½ C. cornstarch  
½ T. salt  
½ t. pepper  
1 egg, room temperature  
¼ C. sparkling water, chilled  
1 T. sesame oil  
1½ lbs. boneless skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch pieces  
Oil for deep fat frying

### Sauce

1 T. canola oil  
½ t. crushed red pepper flakes  
1 T. minced garlic  
1½ t. minced fresh ginger root  
2 T. sugar  
2 T. brown sugar  
2 T. rice vinegar  
2 T. orange juice  
1 T. sodium soy sauce  
1 t. grated orange zest  
1 T. water  
1 T. cornstarch  
Rice

In a large bowl, combine flour, cornstarch, salt and pepper. Whisk in egg, sparkling water and sesame oil until smooth. Add chicken pieces; toss to evenly coat. Cover and transfer to the refriger-

ator. Let chicken marinate at least 30 minutes. Heat oil about ½ to 1 inch deep in a Dutch oven to 350. Working in batches, add a few pieces of the battered chicken to the preheated oil. Cook, turning occasionally until the chicken is deeply golden brown on all sides and cooked through, about 5 to 6 minutes. Transfer fried chicken pieces to a paper towel lined sheet pan to drain. Repeat with remaining chicken pieces.

Heat canola oil in a large skillet to medium-high heat. Add red pepper flakes, garlic and ginger; cook 30 to 60 seconds or until fragrant. Add sugar, brown sugar, rice vinegar, orange juice, soy sauce and orange zest; stir until sugars are dissolved and mixture begins to bubble. In a small bowl, whisk together water and cornstarch until dissolved. Add to sauce; stir until smooth. Cook sauce until it thickens, 1 to 2 minutes. Add fried chicken pieces to sauce; toss gently to coat. Serve with cooked rice.

## Goopy Short Cut Cinnamon Rolls

If you want an easy and tasty breakfast treat, these rolls are just what will make everyone who eats them smile. They take less than an hour from start to finish. Try them for a great weekend treat.

1 can (17.5 oz.) tube refrigerated large cinnamon rolls with icing (5 rolls)  
½ C. heavy cream  
¼ C. salted butter, melted  
¼ C. packed brown sugar

Preheat oven to 350. Grease a 9-inch round baking pan. Arrange cinnamon rolls in prepared pan. Pour cream over rolls. In a small bowl, whisk together melted butter and brown sugar. Spoon mixture over rolls. Bake until almost all of the liquid has been absorbed, and rolls are golden brown, 24 to 28 minutes. Cool in pan 5 minutes. Spread icing over rolls. Serve warm.

## German Chocolate Dump Cake

If you are in need of an easy dessert and are a chocolate lover, you will like this cake. It isn't your usual dump cake, and it doesn't need frosting.

1 C. sweetened shredded coconut  
1½ C. chopped toasted pecans, divided  
1 pkg. devils' food cake mix  
8 oz. Cream cheese, softened  
½ C. butter melted

The Scoop Today & Shopper's Guide

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Wishing you and your family a VERY Happy New Year!

410541

# Cleft lip and cleft palate



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

Approximately one in every sixteen hundred babies born in the United States every year are born with both a cleft lip and cleft palate. In addition, one in every twenty-eight hundred will be born with a cleft lip and one in seventeen hundred will be born with a cleft palate.

Prenatal ultrasound, taken between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> weeks of pregnancy, can diagnose most clefts of the lip because these clefts cause physical changes in the fetus's face. It is more challenging to detect a cleft palate on an ultrasound, therefore the majority of orofacial clefts are diagnosed during the initial newborn exam. This initial diagnosis will be followed up by an evaluation of the extent of your child's condition. The next step will be the development of a comprehensive, individualized treatment plan, with input from members of a multi-disciplinary team which will include some or all of the following: oral surgeon, otolaryngologist (ENT), dentist, speech and hearing therapist, geneticists,

psychologists, lactation specialists and social services.

Whether you learned that your baby has a cleft during a prenatal ultrasound or after delivery, being the parent of a newborn with a cleft lip, cleft palate, or both can feel overwhelming. It can also raise many concerns that may be difficult to talk about. You may worry about how people will react when they see your baby. You might worry about the surgeries your baby will need, how they will recover or how their cleft(s) will impact their physical development and self-esteem throughout their childhood. Things that you took for granted, like feeding your baby, can feel overwhelmingly complicated. Know that your baby's care team is not only concerned about meeting their needs,

but you and your family's needs as well. Do not hesitate to share all your questions and concerns so you can get the information and support you need.

Connecting with other families of children with cleft lip and palate can provide valuable emotional support and information sharing. It may be comforting to know that modern surgical techniques for repairing cleft lip and palate have significantly improved, leading to excellent cosmetic outcomes.

Understanding how these conditions occur may help you to understand the varied interventions that your child may require. As the body forms during pregnancy, cells from each side of the head grow toward the center where they join together to make the face. Therefore, we all start out with orofacial clefts. Normally, between weeks 4-7 of gestation the upper lip fuses. Between weeks 6-9 the palate fuses. Cleft lips and/or cleft palates occur when a baby's lips and/or palate do not form properly or fuse completely

before birth. Cleft lips can range from a small slit to a large defect that extends into the nose. They can occur on one or both sides of the upper lip and, very rarely, in the middle. They can occur with or without a cleft palate. Cleft palates also vary from occurring in only part of the palate to involvement in both the hard and soft palate and may be accompanied by additional defects in the inner ear. Cleft palate can occur alone or in conjunction with a cleft lip. A submucous cleft palate, which is an opening underneath the tissues that cover the palate, is difficult to detect and may not be discovered unless it causes difficulty in feeding or speech.

Babies with an orofacial cleft may struggle to breastfeed or bottle feed effectively because they cannot create a proper seal with their mouth, often

requiring specialized feeding techniques and bottles with special nipples. Due to the anatomical connection between the palate and the eustachian tubes, children with cleft palate are more prone to ear infections which can impact hearing if not treated promptly.

Children with cleft palates often present with defects of the alveolar ridge, the bony ridge that holds the sockets for teeth, helps shape the curvature and proportions of your smile and is involved in making the sounds of speech. Teeth may not develop properly in children with cleft palate, and they may require palate extension, bone grafts and other orthodontic care. A cleft palate may affect the proper formation of speech sounds, potentially leading to a nasal quality or unclear speech, which may require speech therapy or surgery.

While surgery to correct a cleft lip generally takes place around three months, surgery to repair a cleft palate is usually performed between 10-12 months. Since the child will be under anesthesia for the palate repair, this is often when the otolaryngologist will place ear tubes to prevent ear infections, improve hearing and promote the development of normal speech.

Some interventive procedures may be required prior to these surgeries to optimize results. Larger defects may also require bone grafting between seven and nine years of age. If your child needs surgery to improve their speech, it usually occurs around age five. Orthognathic surgery to realign the jaw and more extensive plastic surgeries on the nose will not take place until the child has finished growing.

## •Kitchen (Continued from page 10)

- 2 t. vanilla
- 2 C. powdered sugar
- ½ C. semisweet chocolate chips

Preheat the oven to 350. grease a 9 x 13 baking pan. Sprinkle coconut and 1 C. pecans into bottom of pan. Prepare cake mix according to package directions. Pour batter into prepared pan. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese, butter and vanilla until smooth; beat in powdered sugar. Stir in chocolate chips and remaining ½ C. of pecans. Spoon over batter. Cut through batter with a knife to swirl. Bake 35 to 40 minutes. Cool completely before cutting.

butter in a small heavy saucepan. Cook over medium heat until golden brown, 5 to 7 minutes; cool slightly. Combine brown sugar and eggs in a large bowl until blended. Beat in browned butter slowly. Beat in vanilla. In a small bowl, combine the flour, salt, baking soda and baking powder; gradually add to brown sugar mixture and mix well. Stir in chocolate chips. Drop by quarter cupfuls 2 inches apart onto parchment paper lined baking sheets. Bake at 350 until golden brown, 13 to 15 minutes. Remove to wire racks to cool.

week. There are a lot of activities that people want to go to that require getting out and about. Have a great week trying some new recipes or making some old favorites.

We are searching for recipes for the Super Bowl, so send some favorites our way. We would love to feature some new party recipes as well as some soup recipes. If you find some recipes to share, you can contact us by email 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.

## Final Thoughts

In a previous week's column, I had a Chicken Ranch Bacon Skillet Dip that was made in the oven. One of my friends made it and put it in the crock pot. She said it was delicious and everyone at work liked it. In another previous column, I had the Pasta Fagioli Soup. Another friend made it and put her leftover frozen appetizer meatballs from New Year's Day in it. They were small and added just the right amount of meat to the dish. She also made the Red Velvet Cookies which were a hit at her family's dinner. I am always glad when I hear about your uses of the recipes. Hopefully we are done with the bitter cold that we experienced at the beginning of the

## Brown Butter Chocolate Chip Cookies

This is a different take on the traditional chocolate chip cookie. It uses brown sugar and the nuttiness of browned butter to give a great flavor to an old favorite.

- 1 C. unsalted butter
  - 1¾ C. packed brown sugar
  - 2 eggs, room temperature
  - 1 egg yolk, room temperature
  - 2 t. vanilla
  - 3 C. flour
  - 1 t. salt
  - 1 t. baking soda
  - 1 t. baking powder
  - 2 C. semisweet chocolate chips
- Preheat oven to 350. Place

## •Caucus

(Continued from page 8)

For the past four years, Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth, D-Peoria, served as the House Democrats' lead negotiator—what lawmakers refer to as the "budgeteer." But starting this year, Welch will rely on a team of three "co-budgeteers," all Chicagoans: Reps. Kam Buckner, Eva-Dina Delgado, and Will Guzzardi.

Gordon-Booth will remain a part of the leadership team as an assistant majority leader. She previously held the title of speaker pro-tempore, a position that will now go to Buckner. Rep. Robyn Gabel, of Evanston, will continue to serve as majority leader.

*A Great Big*  
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# LEGAL NOTICES

## ANNUAL TREASURER'S REPORT OF THE VILLAGE OF LENA LENA, ILLINOIS May 1, 2023 through April 30, 2024

TO THE HONORABLE VILLAGE PRESIDENT AND THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
OF THE VILLAGE OF LENA, ILLINOIS:

The undersigned Village Treasurer hereby submits the Annual Treasurer's Report of all monies collected by the Village Treasurer and expended by the Village of Lena, Illinois through the Treasurer's office for the fiscal year ended April 30, 2024, pursuant to Public Act 92-354, which revised Chapter 24, 3.1-35-65 of 65 ILCS 5.

	GENERAL	SPECIAL REVENUE	ENTERPRISE	TOTAL	LENA CEMETERY ASSOCIATION
<b>REVENUES</b>					
Property Tax	\$ 264,798	\$ 850,953	\$ -	\$ 1,115,751	\$ 9,697
Sales Tax	798,638	-	-	798,638	-
State Income Tax	453,817	-	-	453,817	-
CPP Replacement Tax	36,399	7,718	-	44,117	-
Video Gaming Tax	57,810	-	-	57,810	-
Motor Fuel Tax	-	121,625	-	121,625	262
Telecommunications Tax	-	13,442	-	13,442	-
Licenses & Permits	23,430	-	-	23,430	-
Franchise & Other Fees	9,801	-	-	9,801	-
Fines & Forfeitures	3,906	-	-	3,906	-
Cemetery Charges for Services	-	-	-	-	22,000
Miscellaneous	82	4,650	-	4,732	38,004
Interest	153,252	11,994	39,108	204,354	2,266
Intergovernmental	24,000	-	-	24,000	-
Grants	-	-	73,847	73,847	-
Loan Proceeds	-	-	-	-	-
Rentals	7,641	-	22,200	29,841	-
Garbage Charges for Services	-	-	214,063	214,063	-
Water Charges for Services	-	-	442,058	442,058	-
Sewer Charges for Services	-	-	738,378	738,378	-
Stormwater Charges of Services	-	-	89,356	89,356	-
Transfer from Other Funds	-	1,203,435	58,616	1,262,051	-
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>1,833,574</b>	<b>2,213,817</b>	<b>1,677,626</b>	<b>5,725,017</b>	<b>72,229</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>					
Salaries	673,449	1,200	78,333	752,982	20,975
Employee Benefits	127,536	125,993	30,787	284,316	-
Uniforms	4,340	-	174	4,514	-
Repair & Maintenance	254,702	114,974	357,502	727,178	3,525
Professional Services	124,797	81,608	69,448	275,853	-
Office Expense	5,166	-	9,129	14,295	365
Telephone	3,793	-	1,240	5,033	-
Publications/Advertising	8,713	-	694	9,407	-
License/Permits	-	-	10,000	10,000	-
Travel/Training/Dues	8,646	-	1,219	9,865	-
Utilities/Pumping	556	-	121,077	121,633	-
Street Lighting	22,839	19,388	-	42,227	-
Rentals	19,279	-	-	19,279	-
Other Contractual Services	28,034	-	-	28,034	-
Gas & Oil	26,381	-	5,015	31,396	1,949
Supplies	14,985	-	33,845	48,830	387
Community Relations	2,000	-	-	2,000	-
Miscellaneous	3,357	-	102,201	105,558	358
Insurance	-	43,922	-	43,922	-
Garbage Services	-	-	207,700	207,700	-
Grave Digging & Foundations	-	-	-	-	5,925
Other Economic Development	-	119,290	-	119,290	-
Interest	-	-	27,096	27,096	-
Depreciation	-	-	348,770	348,770	-
Capital Outlay	295,062	120,248	-	415,310	52,810
Debt Payment	2,326	-	-	2,326	-
Transfer to Other Funds	-	1,203,435	-	1,203,435	-
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>1,625,961</b>	<b>1,830,058</b>	<b>1,404,230</b>	<b>4,860,249</b>	<b>86,294</b>
Excess Revenues Over (Under)					
Expenditures	207,613	383,759	273,396	864,768	(14,065)
Fund Balance/Net Position, 4/30/23	2,431,809	1,347,407	6,316,653	10,095,869	135,785
Change in prior period	-	-	-	-	-
Fund Balance/Net Position, 4/30/24	\$2,639,422	\$ 1,731,166	\$ 6,590,049	\$10,960,637	\$ 121,720

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 15TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT JO DAVIESS COUNTY - GALENA, ILLINOIS U.S. BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION Plaintiff, -v- LYNN M. RANDECKER et al Defendant

2019 CH 17 NOTICE OF SALE

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on July 11, 2019, an agent for The Judicial Sales Corporation, will at 1:30 PM on February 6, 2025, at the office of Vincent Roth Toepfer & Leinen PC, 11406 U.S. Route 20 W, Galena, IL, 61036, sell at a public in-person sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate:

PARCEL NUMBER FOUR (4) IN "COUNCIL RIDGE COUNTRY ESTATES" SITUATED IN THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION THIRTY-THREE (33) IN TOWNSHIP TWENTY-NINE (29) NORTH, RANGE ONE (1) EAST OF THE FOURTH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, VINEGAR HILL TOWNSHIP, JO DAVIESS COUNTY, ILLINOIS, ALL AS SHOWN ON PLAT OF SURVEY OF TERRENCE LEIFKER, ILLINOIS REGISTERED LAND SURVEYOR, RECORDED ON NOVEMBER 9, 1993 IN PLAN HOLD C OF PLATS AT NUMBER 285, AS DOCUMENT NUMBER 227379, PARCEL NUMBER FOUR (4) BEING DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: A PARCEL OF LAND LOCATED IN THE SW 1/4 OF SECTION 33, TOWNSHIP 29 NORTH, RANGE 1 EAST OF THE FOURTH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, VINEGAR HILL TOWNSHIP, JO DAVIESS COUNTY, ILLINOIS, WHICH IS BOUNDED BY A LINE DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: COMMENCING AT THE SOUTH 1/4 CORNER OF SAID SECTION 33; THENCE S 89 DEG. 10' 53" W, 1966.19 FEET ON THE SOUTH LINE OF THE SW 1/4 OF SAID SECTION 33 TO THE SOUTHWEST

CORNER OF "ELMER SOAT'S ADDITION TO VINEGAR HILL TOWNSHIP" (RECORDED AS DOC. NUMBER 130579); THENCE N 00 DEG. 58' 30" E, 144.02 FEET (RECORDED 144.22 FEET) TO THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF SAID ADDITION, SAID POINT BEING THE POINT OF BEGINNING. THENCE N 00 DEG. 24' 00" E, 375.18 ALONG THE CENTERLINE OF NORTH COUNCIL HILL ROAD; THENCE N 89 DEG. 00' 00" E, 705.00 FEET; THENCE S00 DEG. 00' 00" W, 254.94 FEET; THENCE S 77 DEG. 00' 00" W, 507.77 FEET TO THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF "ELMER SOAT'S ADDITION TO VINEGAR HILL TOWNSHIP"; THENCE S 85'04'48"W, 213.54 FEET ON THE NORTH BOUNDARY OF SAID ADDITION TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. SAID PARCEL CONTAINS 5.28 ACRES, MORE OR LESS.

Commonly known as 6045 N COUNCIL HILL RD, GALENA, IL 61036 Property Index No. 19-000-061-54

The real estate is improved with a single family residence.

Sale terms: 25% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the sale payable to The Judicial Sales Corporation. No third party checks will be accepted. The balance, in certified funds/or wire transfer, 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.

Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser will receive a Certificate of Sale that will entitle the purchaser to a deed to the real estate after confirmation of the sale.

The property will NOT be open for inspection and plaintiff makes no representation as to the condition.

# LEGAL NOTICES

Continued from previous page

tion of the property. Prospective bidders are admonished to check the court file to verify all information.

If this property is a condominium unit, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and the legal fees required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(1) and (g)(4). If this property is a condominium unit which is part of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by The Condominium Property

Act, 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1).

**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.**

You will need a photo identification issued by a government agency (driver's license, passport, etc.) in order to gain entry into our building and the foreclosure sale room in Cook County and the same identification for sales held at other county venues where

The Judicial Sales Corporation conducts foreclosure sales.

For information, examine the court file, CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C. Plaintiff's Attorneys, 15W030 NORTH FRONTAGE ROAD, SUITE 100, BURR RIDGE, IL, 60527 (630) 794-9876

**THE JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION**

One South Wacker Drive, 24th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606-4650 (312) 236-SALE

You can also visit The Judicial Sales Corporation at [www.tjsc.com](http://www.tjsc.com) for a 7 day status report of pending sales.

**CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C.**

15W030 NORTH FRONTAGE ROAD, SUITE 100 BURR RIDGE IL, 60527 630-794-5300

E-Mail: [pleadings@il.cslegal.com](mailto:pleadings@il.cslegal.com)  
Attorney File No. 14-19-03892  
Attorney ARDC No. 00468002

Case Number: 2019 CH 17 TJSC#: 44-2874

NOTE: Pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, you are advised that Plaintiff's attorney is deemed to be a debt collector attempting to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

Case # 2019 CH 17 13258409

(Published in

The Scoop Today  
Jan. 8, 15 & 22, 2025)  
466453

## NOTICE

In compliance with The Open Meetings Act, the Rush Township Board will meet on the following dates at 7:00 p.m. at the Rush Town Hall.

January 14, 2025

February 11, 2025

March 11, 2025

April 8, 2025

May 13, 2025

June 10, 2025

July 8, 2025

August 12, 2025

September 9, 2025

October 14, 2025

November 11, 2025

December 9, 2025

(Published in  
The Scoop Today  
Jan. 22, 2025)

466902

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE 15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT STEPHENSON COUNTY - 15 NORTH GALENA AVENUE, FREEPORT, ILLINOIS**

**ESTATE OF Mitchell A. Lyp, DECEASED**

24 PR 74

Notice is given to creditors of the death of the above named decedent. Letters of office were issued to Kathleen Marie Gruszecki, 6614 North Point Road, Rockford, Illinois 61108, as Independent Executor, whose attorney of record is Kathleen Farrell Duhig, Law Offices of Farrell & Farrell, 4550 West 103rd Street, Suite 202, Oak Lawn, Illinois 60453.

The estate will be administered without court

supervision, unless under section 5/28-4 of the Probate Act III. Compiled Stat. 1992, Ch. 755, par. 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 with the clerk or with the representative, or both, on or before July 22, 2025, or, if mailing or delivery of a notice from the representative is required by section 5/18-3 of the Probate Act, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered by the claimant to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.

E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinois-courts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit <http://www.illinois-courts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp>.

Kathleen Farrell Duhig Law Offices of Farrell & Farrell (6296348) 4550 West 103rd Street, Suite 202 Oak Lawn, Illinois 60453 (708)448-2500 13259051

(Published in  
The Shopper's Guide  
Jan. 22, 29, Feb. 5, 2025)

466821

Continued from previous page

## VILLAGE OF LENA Fiscal Year Ended 4/30/24

**COMPENSATION SUMMARY** (These wages are reflected on the cash basis)

**Under \$25,000.00:** Gerald Bennett, Vito Ferro, Nick Georgean, Nicholas Inden, Alexis Simone, Anthony Smith, Luke Benson, Andrew Martin, Rahmarion Roby, Maisen Smith, Michael Snyder, Brooke Baldauf, Christin Keefer, Steve Buss, Claudia Simpson, Leslie Nielson, Brian Peight, Harold Rood, Chelsea White, Brandon Smith, Cathy Stevens, Jacob Andrews

**\$25,000.00 to \$49,999.99:** Hailey Carr, Sierra Maurer, Benjamin Cheeney

**\$50,000.00 to \$74,999.99:** Madison Becke, Nicole Callos, Cameron Reuter, Brandt Esling, Kory Polhill, Jon Schoenhard

**\$75,000.00 to \$99,999.99:** Louis Cusanelli, Wayne Gift,

**Total Salaries - \$771,809.43**

**EXPENDITURE SUMMARY** (These represent cash basis payments) Adkins Energy LLC \$10,738.85 – Advance Technologies \$2,531 – American Legion \$4,478 – Barrick, Switzer, Long, Balsley & VanEvera \$60,213.20 – Benning Group, LLC \$34,550 – Bonebright Construction \$43,613 – Brandon's Hardware \$3,884.69 – Brinkmeier Tree Service \$8,350 – Cargill Inc \$29,781.20 – Civic Systems LLC \$4,036 – CMS Group Insurance Division \$173,688 – Commonwealth Edison \$152,315.22 – Computer Know How, LLC \$2,719 – DNW Building & Remodeling \$16,552 – Doc's Excavating, Inc. \$25,662.52 – DPI Construction, INC \$86,002.50 – EFTPS \$184,675.98 – Erin Township \$3,000 – Evoqua Water Technologies LLC \$19,207.84 – Fehr Graham Associates \$454,157.95 – Fischer Excavating Inc. \$76,706.61 – Freeport Flag Pole Co. \$7,065 – Frinks Sever & Drain Inc \$13,025 – Genesis Power \$7,912.37 – Gill's Disposal \$208,699.97 – H&S Landscaping \$23,720 – Hach Chemical Co \$2,918.64 – Heimann Repair LLC \$4,035 – Helm Materials \$3,845 – Helm Truck and Equipment \$2,746.37 – Highland Community College \$5,195 – Hulscher Fencing, Inc \$24,235 – I.E.P.A. \$209,963.22 – I.M.R.F. \$75,396.16 – Illinois Department of Employment Security \$8,176.51 – Illinois Department of Revenue \$35,614.84 – Inky Printers \$2,978.75 – J&R Supply \$17,091.08 – Keeffer Construction INC. \$22,500 – KS State Bank \$28,859.58 – Leamon's Funeral Home \$40,000 – Lena Postmaster \$8,305 – Lucas Group \$14,455 – Mark Mullen Tree Service \$2,500 – Martelle Water Treatment \$10,582 – Martin Company \$82,680.79 – Menards \$6,531.53 – Metz Welding, INC. \$5,810 – Mississippi Valley Pump \$41,647 – Monroe Truck Equipment \$4,260.32 – Nicor Gas \$11,623.15 – Old Mill LLC \$28,033.96 – Pace Analytical Services LLC \$3,472.10 – Pearl City Elevator Inc. \$10,449.25 – Peerles Well & Pump, INC. \$124,386 – Polhill Electric \$3,648.65 – Porter Brothers \$106,217.71 – Pro Source Electric and Automation INC. \$20,864.63 – Risk Management Association \$67,190.84 – Sabel Mechanical LLC \$58,247.28 – Sherwin Industries INC. \$8,445.47 – Spahn & Rose Lumber Co. \$20,999.67 – State Disbursement Unit \$5,478.10 – Stephenson Service Co. \$35,120.70 – Stockton Auto Supply \$2,994.55 – Tapco \$7,810 – The Cylinder Shop \$3,391.96 – The Electric Guys \$2,547.98 – Air Care INC \$3,915.64 – Uniform Den East, INC \$3,296.74 – USA Blue Book \$6,955.94 – Viking Chemical Co \$3,207.50 – Village of Lena Cemetery \$44,696.95 – Visa \$19,317.21

**All other disbursements in amounts less than \$2,500 = \$85,678.74**

**Total All Vendors = \$3,009,078.67**

The undersigned Treasurer of the Village of Lena in the County of Stephenson and State of Illinois, being duly sworn doth depose and say that the foregoing is a correct statement of the public funds received and expended in the Village of Lena during the fiscal year which began May 1, 2023 and ended April 30, 2024.

Nicole Callos, Village Treasurer  
Subscribed and Sworn to me, this 14th Day of January, 2025.  
Claudia Simpson, Village Clerk

(Published in The Shopper's Guide Jan. 22, 2025)



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## real estate

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## for sale

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**DISCLAIMER NOTICE** This publication does not knowingly accept fraudulent or deceptive advertising. Readers are cautioned to thoroughly investigate all ads, especially those asking for money in advance.

### Burial Needs

7 CEMETERY PLOTS Willing to sell as a group or individually. Located at Roselawn Memory Gardens 3045 WI-67, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. This is a private sale. Contact Randy, the seller at randy@slpublishers.com.

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# State Board of Education seeks \$11.4 billion for PreK-12 spending

**Requested 4.6 percent increase comes in face of projected revenue shortfall**

By Peter Hancock  
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

The Illinois State Board of Education voted Jan. 15 to approve a budget request for the upcoming fiscal year of nearly \$11.4 billion, a 4.6 percent increase over this year's budget, despite projections that the state will face a substantial revenue shortfall next year.

The request includes a \$350 million increase in "Evidence-Based Funding," the minimum annual increase called for under the 2017 law that focuses new education spending on the neediest districts.

It also includes a \$142 million increase in what's called "mandatory categorical" aid for expenses such as transportation and special education, and \$75 million in new funding for early childhood education.

"This year's budget recommendation recognizes the tight fiscal projections faced by the state of Illinois, while continuing to invest in things that we know that are critical for school districts and that have a direct impact on student learning," State Superintendent of Education Tony Sanders told the board.

Funding for PreK-12 education is one of the largest categories of spending in the entire state budget, accounting for about one-fifth of all General Revenue Fund spending. That money is used to help fund the budgets of more than

850 school districts, which serve an estimated 1.9 million students.

State funding, however, makes up only part of the total amount spent on public education. In 2021, the most recent year for which complete numbers are available, state funding made up only about 26 percent of total school spending while about 65 percent came from local sources such as property taxes and the rest came from federal sources.

Over the years, the state's heavy reliance on local property taxes to fund public schools produced vast inequities among districts. The Evidence-Based Funding formula was intended to address that over time by establishing a "hold-harmless" mechanism by which no district would ever see its funding reduced,

then directing new funding to the districts most in need.

The law created a formula for estimating the cost of providing an adequate education in each district based on certain factors such as total student enrollment, the number of students from low-income families and the number of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. The goal of the law is to bring all districts up to at least 90 percent of their adequacy target.

Since the law went into effect, according to ISBE, nearly \$2.2 billion has been distributed to districts through the Evidence-Based Funding system and overall funding for the neediest districts—known as Tier 1 districts—has grown from 59.2 percent of their adequacy target to 73.4 percent.

Still, however, seven out of

10 students in Illinois attend a school in a district that is funded at less than 90 percent of its adequacy target. According to ISBE, bringing all districts up to 90 percent of adequacy would cost an additional \$2.6 billion.

In November, the Governor's Office of Management and Budget reported that the annual increases in education funding called for under the Evidence-Based Funding law, combined with other rising costs and overall flat growth in revenue, would lead to a projected \$3.2 billion budget shortfall in the fiscal year ahead.

Gov. JB Pritzker will outline his plan for plugging that hole when he delivers his budget address to the General Assembly Feb. 19.

Sanders, however, said he remains confident Pritzker and lawmakers will find a way to balance the budget and still fund the agency's budget request.

"While most of state government's going to be looking at potential freezes, we are really pleased to see a governor and legislature that is committed to public education funding, even in tight fiscal times," he said.

## REAL ESTATE NOTICES

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 15TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT JO DAVIESS COUNTY - GALENA, ILLINOIS U.S. BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION Plaintiff, -v- LYNN M. RANDECKER et al Defendant

2019 CH 17

**NOTICE OF SALE**  
PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on July 11, 2019, an agent for The Judicial Sales Corporation, will at 1:30 PM on February 6, 2025, at the office of Vincent Roth Toepfer & Leinen PC, 11406 U.S. Route 20 W, Galena, IL, 61036, sell at a public in-person sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate:

Commonly known as 6045 N COUNCIL HILL RD, GALENA, IL 61036

Property Index No. 19-000-061-54

The real estate is improved with a single family residence.

Sale terms: 25% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the sale payable to The Judicial Sales Corporation. No third party checks will be accepted. The balance, in certified funds/or wire transfer, 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.

Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser will receive a Certificate of Sale that will entitle the purchaser to a deed to the real estate after confirmation of the sale.

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 this property is a condominium unit, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assess-

ments and the legal fees required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(1) and (g)(4). If this property is a condominium unit which is part of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1).

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.

You will need a photo identification issued by a government agency (driver's license, passport, etc.) in order to gain entry into our building and the foreclosure sale room in Cook County and the same identification for sales held at other county venues where The Judicial Sales Corporation conducts foreclosure sales.

For information, examine the court file, CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C. Plaintiff's Attorneys, 15W030 NORTH FRONTAGE ROAD, SUITE 100, BURR RIDGE, IL, 60527 (630) 794-9876 THE JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION

One South Wacker Drive, 24th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606-4650 (312) 236-SALE

You can also visit The Judicial Sales Corporation at www.tjsc.com for a 7 day status report of pending sales. CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C. 15W030 NORTH FRONTAGE ROAD, SUITE 100 BURR RIDGE IL, 60527 630-794-5300 E-Mail: pleadings@il.cslegal.com Attorney File No. 14-19-03892 Attorney ARDC No. 00468002 Case Number: 2019 CH 17 TJS#:#: 44-2874

NOTE: Pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, you are advised that Plaintiff's attorney is deemed to be a debt collector attempting to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose. Case # 2019 CH 17 I3258409

(Published in The Scoop Today Jan. 8, 15 & 22, 2025) 466454

## USMCA's dispute decision a win for Illinois corn farmers

By Tammie Sloup  
FARMWEEK

The United States' victory in its dispute over Mexico's decree to ban genetically modified corn imports is good news for Illinois corn growers.

United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai announced the U.S. prevailed in its dispute under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) challenging certain Mexican biotechnology measures concerning genetically engineered (GE) corn.

The USMCA panel agreed with the U.S. on all seven legal claims, finding that Mexico's measures are not based on science and undermine the market access that Mexico agreed to provide in the USMCA.

"The panel's ruling reaffirms the United States' longstanding concerns about Mexico's biotechnology policies and their detrimental impact on U.S. agricultural exports," Tai said. "It underscores the importance of science-based trade policies that allow American farmers and agricultural producers to compete fairly and leverage their innovation to address climate change and enhance productivity.

"We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the Mexican government to ensure a level playing field and provide access to safe, affordable and sustainable agricultural products on both sides of the border."

The dispute challenged two sets of measures reflected in Mexico's February 2023 presidential corn decree, including an immediate ban on the use of GE corn in dough and tortillas, and an instruction to Mexican government agencies to gradually eliminate the use of GE corn for other food uses

and in animal feed.

The U.S. established the panel in August 2023.

Illinois Farm Bureau President Brian Duncan called the decision an "important victory."

"It was a strong ruling on behalf of U.S. corn growers and a vital export market that we need to remain open," Duncan told RFD Radio. "It's also a victory for rules-based

trade."

IL Corn Growers Association (ICGA) President and Waterloo farmer Garrett Hawkins said the panel's decision is positive news for Illinois corn farmers and Mexican corn importers.

"As the largest corn export state in the union, Illinois corn farmers are proponents of free trade agreements and of making free trade agree-

ments work," Hawkins said in a statement. "ICGA and the National Corn Growers Association had a significant role in fighting this unscientific Mexican government overreach and urging the U.S. Trade Representative to challenge the ban that would limit Mexican buyers' choices and reduce U.S. market access.

See DISPUTE, Page 16

## Freeport police

### Felony possession of a firearm arrest

On Jan. 16, 2025, at 1:15 p.m., Officers with the Freeport Police Department conducted a search warrant at a residence in the 1000 block of S. State Avenue. During a search of the residence, a loaded semi-automatic pistol was located.

The resident, 47-year-old Michael Arbuckle, was arrested and transported to the Police Department where he was processed. A felony charge of Unlawful Possession of a Weapon by a Felon was approved by the Stephenson County State's Attorney. Arbuckle is being held at the

Stephenson County Jail pending the outcome of a detention hearing.

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.

### Possession of firearm arrest

On Jan. 17, 2025, at 11:05 a.m., Officers with the Freeport Police Department conducted a search warrant at a residence in the 700 block of S. Float Avenue. During the execution of the search war-

rant, a loaded semi-automatic pistol was located.

The resident, 20-year-old Demarion Clark, was arrested and transported to the Police

Department where he was processed. A charge of Unlawful Possession of a Weapon No FOID Card was approved by the Stephenson County State's Attorney. Clark is being held at the

Stephenson County Jail pending the outcome of a detention hearing.

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.

### Shots fired incident

Officers of the Freeport Police Department are investigating a shots fired incident that occurred in the 1400 block of S. Oak Avenue. On Jan. 15, 2025, at 7:39 p.m., Officers responded to a Sound Thinking alert in the 1400 block of S. Oak Avenue. Upon arrival, Officers discovered a vehicle parked on Oak Avenue that had been struck by projectiles. The vehicle was unoccupied when the incident occurred.

During the course of the investigation, Officers identified a possible suspect ve-

hicle. That vehicle has been described as a red Chevrolet Silverado truck that was travelling south on Oak Avenue.

The investigation into this incident is ongoing at this time. The Freeport Police Department is asking anyone who may have information about this incident to contact either the Freeport Police Department at 815-235-8222, Staeline Area Crime Stoppers at 866-TIPSNOW, or through texting at Tip411.

### Shots fired incident

Officers of the Freeport Police Department are investigating a shots fired incident that occurred in the 1200 block of S. Oak Avenue. On Jan. 17, 2025, at 12:36 a.m., Officers responded to a Sound Thinking alert in the 1200 block of S. Oak Avenue. Upon arrival, Officers discovered evidence of shots being fired near a sidewalk in front of a residence. Officers were unable to locate any damage to property or victims at this time.

The investigation into this incident is ongoing at this time. The Freeport Police Department is asking anyone who may have information about this incident to contact either the Freeport Police Department.

# Highland library presents 'The Green Book: Navigating the Journey to Equality'

Highland Community College's Clarence Mitchell Library will present "The Green Book: Navigating the Journey to Equality," at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 11 in the Clarence Mitchell Library for Black History Month.

Guest speaker and exhibitor Tammy Gibson will explore the historical significance of *The Green Book*, the challenges of racial discrimination it sought to address, its cultural impact on the African American community, and how it became a symbol of resilience, hope, and the fight for civil rights — offering a glimpse into the everyday lives of Black travelers during a time of profound social injustice. Gibson's exhibit on *The Green Book* will be available in the library from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the day of her program.

Gibson is the founder of the Illinois Black History Museum, as well as an author, re-enactor and black history traveler. Her mission is to raise awareness and preserve pride in African American culture. She earned her B.A. in African American Studies from Chicago State University.

Gibson's increasing interest in African American history has led her to travel extensively, exploring Africa and several cities throughout the United States to gather information about the hidden treasures of African Americans that are erased from history. Journaling the path of her ancestors, Gibson has visited several national parks, historical landmarks, museums, markers, cemeteries, slave plantations and sites of the Underground Railroad. On her journeys she has slept in slave cabins to honor the enslaved and met leaders of the Civil Rights Movement.

Gibson's teaching of African American history through her travels, storytelling and collection of artifacts has inspired adults and youth to explore the importance of the events and people of the African diaspora. Her motto is: "Black history is more than 28 days."

This exhibit and event are free and suitable for all audiences. For more information on the program, contact Laura Watson at 815-599-3456 or [laura.watson@highland.edu](mailto:laura.watson@highland.edu).



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

A bountiful harvest resulted in this corn pile in Amboy (Lee County) last fall. Illinois exports more corn than any other U.S. state, so growers here recently welcomed a key decision concerning trade with Mexico.

## • Dispute (Continued from page 15)

"We are so happy to see the ruling issued in our favor and look forward to building our trade relationship with our top export customer for all types of corn."

From January through October 2024, the United States exported \$4.8 billion of corn to Mexico—the United States' largest export market for the grain.

The panel issued its final report on Dec. 20. Under USMCA rules, Mexico has 45 days from the date of the final report to comply with the panel's findings.

The panel, in its report, wrote that while Mexico is seeking to address genuine concerns in good faith, such concerns should be "channeled into an appropriate risk

assessment process, measures based on scientific principles and in dialogue among all USMCA parties to facilitate a constructive path forward."

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between the Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit [FarmWeekNow.com](http://FarmWeekNow.com).

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US Gov't Insp **BONELESS CENTER CUT PORK LOIN ROAST** **2.69 lb**

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US Grade A Family Pack **CHICKEN DRUMSTICKS** **Buy 1 Get 1 FREE!**

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Kentucky Legend **SLICED BACON** Select Varieties 16 oz **3.99**

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**SULLIVAN'S FOODS**

**Deli Fresh Daily Menu**

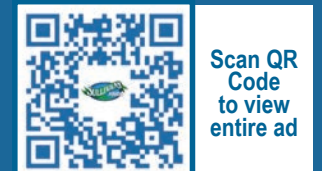
**MONDAY** 8 PC FRIED CHICKEN **\$8.99**

**TUESDAY** CHICKEN POT PIE **\$4.59**

**WEDNESDAY** 5 LEGS, 5 THIGHS FRIED CHICKEN **\$5.55**

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