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WEDNESDAY, JAN. 8, 2025



JO DAVIESS LOCAL FOODS FACEBOOK PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

## Jo Daviess Local Foods wraps up a successful year

Jo Daviess Local Foods (JDLF) celebrated a big year of growth in 2024. During the year, JDLF created their website, purchased a delivery van, started the process of building a physical store location, increased to 14 pick-up locations, worked with 26 organizations that serve low-income families, 43 producers, and 470 customers. JDLF also received a \$140,000 Illinois Local Food Infrastructure Grant to build a local food hub and \$482,067 from the IL-EATS grant, which allowed them to buy food from local farmers and deliver it to food pantries. Thanks to everyone who supported the organization this year!

Postal Customer \*\*ecrws

## Warriors open 2025 with tenth victory of the season

By Trenten Scheidegger  
CORRESPONDENT

The Warren Warriors opened 2025 the same way they finished 2024, with a win. Back on Dec. 20, the Warriors played their final game of 2024. They beat Genoa-Kingston by a final score of 77-56. That was the third-place game in the Forrester Holiday Tournament.

Treyton Pafford dropped 27 points as he helped the Warriors go out with a bang. Pafford wound up being named to the All-Tournament team for his efforts. Bryce VanRaalte was a dominant force as well. VanRaalte racked up 13 rebounds in a double-double effort. He also had five steals and hit over 50 percent of his shots in the victory.

The Warriors had to wait a couple of weeks before they got back in action. After playing on Dec. 2, their next game wasn't until Jan. 4 when they traveled to take on the Amboy Clippers. Fifteen days after their last game, the Warriors looked like they didn't miss a beat.

They did have to shake off some rust in the first quarter. Amboy got off to a hot start, thanks to a trio of early three-pointers. Warren's offense took some time to get going themselves. By the end of the first, Amboy held a 14-8 advantage.

Beau Podnar provided a spark to get the offense rolling in the second quarter. A pair of three-pointers helped keep the Warriors in the game.

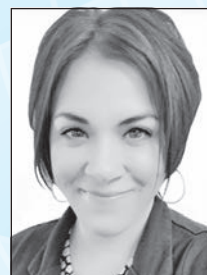
Podnar put up eight points in the quarter, but Warren still found themselves trailing 29-20 at halftime.

Podnar continued to lead the way towards a comeback in the second half. Podnar put up nine points in the third quarter, including his third three-pointer of the night. He helped his team cut the lead down to just two points as they went into the final quarter.

After Podnar helped the Warriors get back into the game, it was Pafford who took over in the fourth quarter. Pafford had just 10 points at the start of the fourth quarter. By the end of the game, he led all scorers with 20. Pafford hit a big three-pointer and went three-for-three at the free throw line in the fourth.

VanRaalte and Bryce Long each added fourth quarter baskets as the Warriors went home with a 57-48 victory. Podnar came in right behind Pafford with 20 points of his own. VanRaalte finished the game with eight points and 11 rebounds. Pafford also led the team in rebounds with 12, giving him a double-double on the evening.

With the win, the Warriors improved to 10-2 on the season. On Thursday, Jan. 9 the Warriors face a tough test as they travel to take on the Scales Mound Hornets. Scales Mound got off to a 4-7 start to the season, but multiple losses came by 10 points or less. That game is set to tipoff at 7:15 p.m.



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# Worried about grid reliability, state officials seek to boost renewables, energy storage

## Lawmakers and advocates rush to avert a crisis as prices and demand spike

By Andrew Adams  
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

When you flip the switch, the lights come on. But in Illinois, after years of sweeping reforms to the energy industry and growing demand for electricity, that premise is coming into question.

Several experts—including those involved in crafting the state's energy reform, current and former regulators, and those in the renewable energy industry—are warning that prices will spike this summer and rolling blackouts could become necessary in the coming years. That is, unless the state takes action to make sure enough electricity is available—in the right place and at the right times of day.

"If we don't continue finding other ways of energy—making sure we can store it in some way—we're going to see that supply and demand kind of thing," Rep. Barbara Hernandez, an Aurora Democrat and sponsor of a bill to incentivize energy storage, told Capitol News Illinois. "We'll see a lot of demand, but the supply will not be there and it's going to create a lot of blackouts in our communities. But also, our families are going to be paying the price and we're going to see an increase in utilities."

Several factors contribute to the concern over the grid's

future. A growing number of data centers in the U.S. and in Illinois are demanding massive amounts of energy. The state's fossil fuel industry is, by design, in decline. And backlogs at regional grid operators have delayed renewable electricity generation from coming online.

The state also isn't bringing renewable energy online quickly enough, according to a lead sponsor of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act—Gov. JB Pritzker's marquee climate legislation that seeks to decarbonize the state's electric grid by 2045.

"We in Illinois are behind on our goals for renewable generation," Sen. Bill Cunningham, D-Chicago, told Capitol News Illinois.

Lawmakers, meanwhile, are hurriedly working to find solutions that could be rolled out quickly to keep electricity reliable and affordable.

A short lame duck legislative session that was planned for Jan. 4-7 could become an energy policy battleground with long-term consequences. But the tight timeline could cause the legislative process to drag into Springfield's regular session as a new General Assembly was sworn in Wednesday, Jan. 8.

### Illinois' renewable energy plan

In 2021, state lawmakers

passed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, or CEJA, a sweeping regulatory reform that advocates hailed as a nation-leading effort to transition the state off fossil fuels while boosting the economy and protecting consumers.

But three years in, the state is struggling to keep up with its goals to bring new renewable energy online as fossil fuel plant owners reconsider their future in a state that's looking to fully phase out carbon emissions by 2045.

Coal-fired electricity generation fell from 46 percent of the state's portfolio in 2009 to 15 percent in 2023 due to tightening emissions regulations and economic pressures according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. About one-third of the total drop in coal capacity occurred in 2022 alone.

Natural gas-powered generation increased over that period, reaching an all-time high last year, but those plants will also be subject to closure over the next two decades.

CEJA's aim was to replace fossil fuels with renewables by incentivizing investment in wind and solar. But regulators now worry that the pool of money that funds that transition could soon fall short.

Illinois requires electric utilities to supply a minimum percentage of customer demand with renewable energy. The Illinois Power Agency purchases this electricity at

"procurement events" using a complex system of financial instruments such as "renewable energy credits." It tracks its progress through what's known as the renewable portfolio standard, or RPS.

The RPS is funded by Illinois utility customers through a charge on their monthly bills. Utilities then use the money collected from this charge to purchase renewable energy credits.

The state's next benchmark is to have 40 percent of electricity sales come from renewable sources by 2030. As of last October, the RPS was less than halfway to meeting that mark, although there is still time for the state to back new developments to meet that goal.

IPA Director Brian Granahan said while the RPS' funding is sufficient for now, it could fall short in the near future.

"We face substantial uncertainty past 2026," Granahan told Capitol News Illinois.

The IPA's most recent forecast shows the RPS facing a potential budget shortfall by mid-2027, based on its long-term renewable procurement plan. By 2039, the RPS has a projected budget shortfall of \$3.13 billion. This "uncertainty" over the future of the RPS budget has several causes, including forecasted increases in the price of renewable energy credits. Increased demand for electricity also contributes to higher project-

ed costs in the RPS budget.

### Energy storage

Illinois lawmakers, energy industry groups and consumer advocates are looking to address another well-established problem with renewable energy—its intermittent nature.

Because solar and wind generation cannot be turned on or off at times of high demand—like natural gas or coal plants—they often generate electricity at the "wrong" times of day. Solar, for example, stops generating electricity in the evening and at night, but the peak daily demand

often comes as people return home from work.

"Not all megawatts are created equal," Pruitt said. "A megawatt that's delivered at 2 in the morning does not have the same value as a megawatt that's delivered at 3 in the afternoon."

One proposal would implement new incentives for building large-scale batteries at either the consumer or power plant scale to store electricity generated by renewables and make its availability more regular.

See OFFICIALS, Page 11

## Obituary

### BETTY ANN MACKEBEN

Betty Ann Mackeben, age 94, and life-long resident of Stockton, IL passed away with family by her side at Winn Prairie Assisted Living Facility, Freeport, IL, on Dec. 29, 2024. She was born in the family farmhouse just outside of Woodbine, IL on April 29, 1930. The daughter of the late John and Anna Jones, Betty learned strength, devotion and love from being raised on the farm with four older brothers. Betty married her high school love, Clifford Mackeben, on Feb. 10, 1952. They were graduates of the Stockton High School Class of 1948.

Betty's life was centered around love for family, and friendships. Her love for "Cliff" never wavered over 68 years of marriage. She missed him immensely after his passing in 2020. Together they raised four children, travelled the country visiting all fifty states, and built many friendships in Stockton. They established a second community of friends having spent winters in Myrtle Beach, SC for 25 years. For many years, she and Cliff were an active team in many euchre and bridge card clubs around town. It's safe to speculate

they were considered champions of the once very active bridge club of Stockton!

Following high school graduation Betty attended hair salon school in Rockford, IL earning her credentials in hair styling. From the early 1950's until retiring in 1992 she maintained an in-home beauty salon, servicing many Stockton residents.

Betty is survived by her children, Joan Lee Mackeben of Franklin, TN, David Mackeben of Sycamore, IL, Dan (Karen) Mackeben of Lodi, CA, Cathy (Butch) Magee of Stockton. Grandchildren, Mark Mackeben, Melanie (Chris) Stearns, Ben (Cora) Magee, Anna (Alex) Goulart, Dylan Mackeben, and great-grandchildren Audrey and Anthony Goulart, Grant and Colin Stearns, and Owen Magee, whose sister will be born in April 2025. She was preceded in death by her husband, parents, and brothers, Lester, Kenneth, Gerald ("Bud"), and Delmar.

A celebration of Betty's life will be held at a later date when a memorial fund will be established. Condolences may be shared with her family at [www.hermannfuneral-home.com](http://www.hermannfuneral-home.com).

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# Around the Northern Hills

Why be a Farm Bureau member, you ask? Farm Bureau fights for farmers. We represent three out of every four farmers in Illinois. Whether you have 10 acres or 10,000, we are here to serve you. For more than 100 years, we have stood by our mission to improve the future of agriculture.

Farm Bureau gives back. From scholarships to resources for teachers or donating nearly 1 million meals to local food banks, we take pride in caring for our communities.

Farm Bureau works the Hill. Capitol Hill, that is. We're a grassroots organization. Our members work with local, state and federal legislatures to help protect farmers and develop better ways to farm.

Farm Bureau keeps you in the know. From apps to workshops, we're known for our factual information that helps farmers work smarter and consumers stay informed.

Farm Bureau saves you money. You will find more than 302,000 discounts on agriculture, health, travel and automotive programs on the Illinois Farm Bureau Member Benefit App. You can't afford not to be an Illinois Farm Bureau Member.

### Scholarships available

Students, make sure that you are working on scholarships! The Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau Foundation has scholarships available. We again have two different scholarships for those students majoring in an agricultural related field.

The first scholarship is geared specifically to Highland Community College Ag students. High School Seniors or those already enrolled at HCC can apply. The second scholarship is a general scholarship for any post-secondary school. For this scholarship, the student needs to be currently in their



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

first year of college. This scholarship is only available to Jo Daviess County Farm Bureau members and their children. You can find the application on our website at <https://jodaviesscfb.com/scholarships/>. Applications are due March 1.

### Farm Bureau's member benefit platform

Have you had a chance to try out Illinois Farm Bureau's member benefit platform? This is a great way that you can save as a farm bureau member! Personally, I have come across some great discounts through this platform. What I like is that you can set up notifications on your phone to be alerted of nearby discounts.

To access the new web platform at <https://ilfb.abenity.com>, members must create an account and provide their Illinois Farm Bureau member number. Members can also go to the iPhone app store, search IL Farm Bureau membership benefits and download the app on their iPhone or iPad. If you have any questions about the new member benefit platform, feel free to call our office.

### Farm Fun Fact

Beef is consumed 70 million times daily across America. Each year Americans consume 25 billion hamburgers.



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# Northwest Illinois Economic Development announces 2025 Build It Grow It program

Northwest Illinois Economic Development (NWILED) has announced its plans for the 2025 Build It Grow It program, a free entrepreneurial bootcamp designed to empower aspiring business owners and entrepreneurs. Building on the success of the 2024 program, which saw 44 individuals register and 23 graduate with certificates of achievement, Build It Grow It 2025 will offer even more valuable resources and opportunities.

Build It Grow It is a collaborative effort among NWILED, The Foundation for Northwest Illinois,

Gradient Coaching & Consulting, Highland Community College, and Basket Case Galena. This year's program will run from January to April, with session locations alternating between the Davis Community Center in Mount Carroll and Mud Run Beer Co. in Stockton.

The program will cover a range of essential business topics, including business legacy, entrepreneurship and financial management, and digital marketing and branding.

Thanks to a special grant from The Foundation for Northwest Illinois, the

entire program is free for participants. Each session will include a light meal. Connect with other entrepreneurs and industry professionals, learn from experienced business leaders and mentors, and pitch your business idea to a panel of investors for a chance to win up to \$5,000.

Build It Grow It is open to small business owners, managers, entrepreneurs, and high school and college students. Whether you're just starting out or looking to expand your existing business, this program can help you achieve your goals.

# Monarch butterflies proposed as threatened species

By Tammie Sloup  
FARMWEEK

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is proposing federal protections for the monarch butterfly.

The service Thursday, Dec. 12, proposed to list the monarch butterfly as a threatened species and designate critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

According to a notice in the Federal Register, USFWS determined the monarch butterfly meets the definition of a threatened species due to the ongoing impacts from loss and degradation of habitat, exposure to insecticides and the effects of climate change.

"To improve future conditions so that the monarch migratory populations stabilize and grow, we need to (1) achieve a significant increase in the availability of milkweed and nectar plants in monarch breeding and migratory areas; (2) protect and enhance overwintering habitat; (3) avoid and minimize impacts to monarchs and their habitat from insecticides and herbicides; and (4) maintain public support for the conservation of monarch butterflies," it is written in the notice.

"Because of the monarch butterfly's general habitat use and wide distribution, all sectors of society, including

the general public, have an opportunity to participate in a broad range of conservation efforts throughout the species' range."

The listing proposal is accompanied by a proposed 4(d) rule that offers species-specific protections and flexibilities to encourage conservation and a proposed "critical habitat" designation for the species at its overwintering grounds in 4,395 acres in coastal California. Federal agencies are prohibited from destroying or modifying areas with that des-

ignation.

Two informational meetings and public hearings also have been scheduled. Comments can be submitted to the Federal Register through March 12.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/3OQ4ZIT](http://bit.ly/3OQ4ZIT).

*This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.*



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# OPINION



## Slices of life

# On any exciting Sunday



By **JILL PERTLER**  
Columnist

I normally like my Sundays to be dull. Well, except for football. I like football on Sundays to be exciting, but otherwise, the more tedious and boring, the better.

There's enough excitement during the rest of the week, with Tuesday being Tuesday and all—and I won't even get started on breadth and depth of Wednesday.

Sundays are for repose and quietude.

As planned, last Sunday started out like any normal day after Saturday. But that changed quicker than you can say "Sunday funday."

I didn't expect any USPS deliveries, it being a Sunday and all, so imagine my surprise when I saw the mail truck stop at the edge of my driveway. Exclamation point. What could it be?

It was a package, of course, and I watched the mail lady gingerly place it at my porch stoop. Not wanting to startle her with a preemptive door-opening, I waited patiently in the shadows as she went back to the mail truck to grab a package for my next-door neighbor.

A double Sunday delivery! I caught my breath in anticipation. How much more exciting could the day possibly become?

I watched as the mail lady dutifully set the second package on my neighbor's front porch. She turned to head back to her vehicle and then, it happened. Excitement upon excitement, in the worst of ways. Unexpected and unwanted, but exciting nonetheless.

(Even the mail lady would have to admit that.)

The mail truck at the end of my driveway began to move in reverse - down the roadway. On its own. Unattended. Suffice to say it was not a self-driving vehicle.

My two sons happened to be in the living room watching football and they witnessed the scene right along with me. "Go out and help her," I managed to say. I may have whispered it, or even yelled. It's all a blur at this point.

The boys both sprang into action. On a chilly 72-degree Florida day, they braved the cold, in bare feet, to chase an errant mail truck, traveling in reverse, without a driver, down our street. Seconds seemed like lifetimes as I watched the scene unfold before me: A mail truck traveling backwards. Two sons and a mail lady running fervently after it. Me, a helpless bystander, following behind the crowd, hoping for the best.

And the best it turned out to be. Son number one caught up with the vehicle and hopped in. (Thank goodness some mail trucks don't have doors.) Before you could say, "Priority delivery," the truck stopped - thankfully before hitting any trees, cars, people or dogs.

Everyone was a bit ruffled—rightly so - so no one exchanged names or took the usual selfies to commemorate the occasion. I think maybe the mail lady was glad about that. Instead, we each headed in our own direction.

The boys and I went back into the house to watch our football team win. I opened the package worthy of a Sunday delivery and it was a glue gun. (Cordless!)

So to sum it all up, as of last Sunday, my football team is now 11 and 2 and I have a new glue gun. You see how the day was exciting?

Hopefully next Sunday will return to its regular dullness. One can only hope.

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

## Weekly connection

# Out of the ashes

A little over two years ago, one of the three silos on the home farm by the dairy barn came crashing down in the middle of the night and destroyed the milkhouse and about a third of the barn. Thankfully, it happened in the middle of the night and no one or animal was hurt. My brother and his sons who were mulling about a hundred cows at that sight moved their herd down to where I live. I had sold my forty cows about five months prior, so my parlor and barn were available. It was about five o'clock in the



By **SCOTT CERNEK**  
Columnist

morning when I got the call that day to see if they could move the cows down to my place immediately. My wife and I agreed, and I ran out to the milkhouse to see what needed to be done to get it ready. After running the vacuum pump, washing the

pipeline, and carrying all the junk out of the parlor that had accumulated over the past five months, things were ready to go. It was a chore to get these stanchion and tie stall cows to walk into the parlor, but after a couple weeks they figured it out and everything started to operate smoothly. They culled the herd down to about half the numbers of what they were milking.

Things came alive at our place once again. Immediately there was a great deal of traffic in and out of our drive as the feed needed to be brought over, the milk truck started coming every day, the breeder made his stops, the supply guy and veterinarians were also in and out of the place constantly. As much activity as there was, it was nice to get the barn and parlor back up and running. Things went well for a couple years and then last month my brother and his sons decided that dairying on the neighbor's place was not the best long-term plan,

so they called it quits. The cows and heifers were sold, and things have become very quiet around here once again. It's hard to see the parlor just sitting there, but I now have about thirty-five head of beef taking the place of the dairy cows.

Back at the home farm where the barn was crushed by the falling silo, things have slowly taken shape. Since my dad left the farm to all eight of us kids, it took a little time to decide and agree on what our plan was going to be. Finally, we decided to lift the haymow up in the air and knock the walls of the barn down and get the debris out of the way. While the haymow was suspended in the air, we poured footings at ground level and sat the haymow down on them. Now we no longer have a dairy on the home farm, but we do have what in essence is a new shed to park some of the old antique machinery in.

See **ASHES**, Page 16

## FREELANCE REPORTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS NEEDED

Rock Valley Publishing is seeking freelance reporters and photographers to produce local news and photos for your hometown newspaper. Weekly stories and photos needed for Jo Daviess and Stephenson Counties. Writing and reporting experience a plus. Work from home as an independent contractor with no in-office requirement.

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# Lena Lions news



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Lion Jim Meyers led a presentation to United Way Director Connie Kraft, for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which provides free books to children in our local communities.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

On Dec. 12, a group representing the Lena Lions, attended the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois Excalibur Excelsior Award Ceremony held in Rockford at the Prairie Street Brewery. The Club was presented with the Stephenson County Champion Award. It was a truly amazing night to be recognized alongside all the other individuals and organizations. Thank you to Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, the Rockford Register Star, and Northern Illinois Center for Nonprofit Excellence for this honor.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Lions Bill Crichton, Elaine McCabe, Gary and Marcia Meyers and Glenn Harman decorated a tree for the Winter Wonderland display at the Lena Living Center.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

This group of Lions celebrated milestone years with the Lena Lions, these members total 245 years collectively. Congratulations!

## Lions Club annual Veteran's Collection

During the month of December, the Lena Lions held their annual Veteran's Collection. Through the generosity of the community, the Lena Lions were able to deliver nearly two pickup trucks full of socks, gloves, hats, toiletries and other

items to be used by men and women that have served the country. Everything collected will be used by the veterans.

The Lions would like to thank Lena Churches, Cedarville Methodist Church, My Friends Closet, and Home-town Trophies and for being

a collection point for donations items. A huge thank you also goes out to everyone who donated to the Lions Club annual Veterans Collection.



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# Panthers bounce back with comeback effort against Steamers

By Trenten Scheidegger  
CORRESPONDENT

After getting off to a 9-2 start to the 2024-2025 Illinois High School boys basketball season, the Le-Win Panthers faced some adversity last week. On Monday, Dec. 30 the Panthers wrapped up the year with a championship game against the Galena Pirates in this year's Warkins Tournament. Galena has continued to be one of the top teams in the conference. The Pirates picked up their tenth win of the season when they claimed the Warkins championship over Le-Win.

It was a battle of the defenses in the first half. The Le-Win offense managed just seven first quarter points. They held Galena to just nine first quarter points of their

own. That tenacious defense kept the Panthers in the game early on. Someone needed to step up offensively, and that someone was Koby Kearns. With a quick three-pointer, Kearns wound up with seven second quarter points. That was more than half of Le-Win's production as they combined for 12 points in the quarter.

Kearns' outburst and Le-Win's team defense allowed them to take a slim 19-18 lead into the halftime break. Le-Win has proven to be a good second half team this year, but it was Galena who came out strong following the break. The Pirates combined for 16 points in the third quarter, nearly matching their 19-point total from the entire first half.

Galena hit a couple of big

fourth quarter three-pointers to help them seal the deal on a 47-39 victory over the Panthers. Miles Mahon was the only consistent part of Le-Win's offense. He led the Panthers in scoring with 14 points, but he was the only one in double figures. Le-Win's next leading scorer was Kearns with seven, all of which came in the second quarter.

After ending 2024 with a tough loss to the Pirates, the Panthers were eager to get to the new year. They had to wait a few days, but they finally opened the 2025 part of the season with a home game on Jan. 3. That evening, the Panthers played host to a scrappy 5-9 Fulton Steamers squad.

The new year got off to a slower start than the last

game of 2024. The first quarter was essentially a disaster for the Panthers. Despite being at home, Le-Win struggled to get their offense going. On Fulton's end, the Steamers were red-hot from deep. Fulton's leading scorer, Jacob Voss, sunk four three-pointers in the first quarter alone. Voss helped the Steamers jump out to a 16-8 advantage.

Mark Blakely's Panthers are not known to give up after going down early. They put on one of their best comeback efforts of the season in the first game of 2025. After getting doubled up in the first quarter, the Panthers brought the energy in quarter two.

Le-Win combined for 17 points in the second quarter. Luke Madigan hit a pair of big three-pointers. Mahon

put up four points, including going two for two at the line. Aiden Wild added five points of his own as the Panthers cut the lead down to two points before the half. Le-Win went into the break trailing 27-25.

Once the Panthers gained the momentum, they never gave it up. Jaylen Rakowska hit a hat trick of three-pointers in the third quarter. Michael Mowery and Wild combined for eight points as the Panthers not only took the lead but expanded upon it. After three quarters of play, Le-Win held a 42-34 advantage.

They didn't let up in the final quarter. If anything, the Panthers looked like they were back to their regular selves. The offense combined for 14 points, all of which came from inside the

three-point arch. Defensively, the Panthers held Fulton to just five points.

The Panthers didn't just pull off a big comeback. In the end, they routed the Steamers to the tune of a 56-39 final score. Rakowska led the team in scoring with 13, 11 of which came in the second half. Wild was next up with 12 points. Madigan finished the day with nine, while Mahon had eight. Both Mowery and Kearns finished with six points each.

With the win, the Panthers picked up their tenth victory of the season. That improved their overall record to 10-3 on the year. The Panthers face another big test on Jan. 13 when they play host to the Pecatonica Indians. The Indians are currently 11-0 on the year.

# Stephenson and Carroll County Farm Bureau news

By Victoria Hansen

It is hard to believe that schools are back in session, and we are only about four and a half months away from graduation season. Throughout the holiday season while visiting family, it was brought up several times, with our future and current college students, how important it is to apply for scholarships. Scholarships are offered by the Illinois Farm Agriculture Association Foundation, Carroll County Farm Bureau Foundation and Stephenson County Farm Bureau Foundation. Each scholarship has its own deadline, and additional details are listed below.

low.

Illinois Agriculture Association Foundation Scholarships are due Feb. 15, 2025, and can be found at [www.iaafoundation.org](http://www.iaafoundation.org) under the scholarships tab.

Carroll County Farm Bureau Scholarships can be found at [www.carrollcfb.org](http://www.carrollcfb.org) and are due on March 3, 2025, at or before 1 p.m.

Stephenson County Farm Bureau Scholarships are due April 4, 2025, and can be found at [www.stephensoncfb.org](http://www.stephensoncfb.org) under the news tab.

If you have questions, please contact your county Farm Bureau Carroll, 815-244-3001 or Stephenson, 815-232-3186.

## Travel preview meeting

County Farm Bureau in North West Illinois partner with Tri-State travel to host multi-day trips. We will be hosting a travel preview for these trips at the Stephenson County Farm Bureau Office on Jan. 15 at 5 p.m. Upcoming trips include Mackinac Island in 2025 and Australia/New Zealand in 2026. Reservations are not required but appreciated. To RSVP please call 815-232-3186 (Stephenson) and 815-244-3001 (Carroll). These programs and trips are open to the public.

IL on Jan. 21, 2025, or at the Carroll County Farm Bureau, 811 S Clay Street Mt. Carroll, IL on Feb. 6, 2025. To learn more about pricing and registration details please call the county Farm Bureau that you plan to participate at. Carroll County Farm Bureau, 815-244-3001 and Stephenson County Farm Bureau 815-232-3186.

impact on the Champaign CFB cannot be overstated as he has served as Champaign CFB president and held numerous roles as a board director, including as chair of the legislative, policy development, and political involvement committee. In addition to serving Champaign CFB, Warfel helped establish the Champaign CFB Foundation and served as both vice president and president of the foundation. He was also crucial in developing the Earth Partners program, a precursor to the current Ag in the Classroom program.

Burnett is recognized for his exemplary service to Massac CFB and the local agriculture community and organizations as an advocate for agricultural innovation. Burnette has served on the Massac CFB board for 40 years and actively participates in leadership programs and conferences held through IFB and the American Farm Bureau Federation. He has participated in IFB Leaders to Washington and traveled to other countries on IFB Market Study Tours. He is a top supporter of Massac CFB Young Leaders and a huge advocate for Agriculture in the Classroom.

## Three Agricultural Leaders Named IFB Eagle Award Winners

Rollo Burnett, of Metropolis, Lin Warfel, of Tolono, and Mike Hodge, of Salem, the 2024 Eagle Award for Excellence in recognition of their contributions to the organization and agriculture industry. The Eagle Award recognizes an individual or organization for excellence on issues or programs important to Illinois Farm Bureau and to agriculture on a statewide or national basis. They were presented with the award during IFB's annual meeting in Chicago, Sunday, Dec. 8.

Warfel, a retired farmer, is recognized for his dedication to agriculture through his involvement and leadership with Champaign County Farm Bureau (CFB). His

Additionally, Burnett has served as a board director for Fruit Belt FS, which later merged with Twin County FS to become Southern FS. He became president of Southern FS in 2020. Hodge has played an integral role at IFB since he started as a manager trainee in 1986 and working his way from holding two county manager positions, a regional manager role, and retiring as IFB executive director of member services and public relations (MSPR). In September 2016, Hodge created IFB's marketing department, which allowed the organization to expand its in-house design services that are offered to internal IFB departments and CFBs. In addition to expanding marketing efforts, Hodge transformed IFB's presence at the IL State Fair through designing the organization's iconic Jr. Livestock T-shirt, which is given to every youth showing livestock at the State Fair. He also helped IFB launch its sponsorship of the live streaming of livestock shows, the Grand Drive and the Sale of Champions for those unable to attend the events could still watch.

Warfel, a retired farmer, is recognized for his dedication to agriculture through his involvement and leadership with Champaign County Farm Bureau (CFB). His



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# 4-H Camp registration now open for northern Illinois

Registration for 4-H Camp 2025 is open. 4-H Camp is set for June 8-12, 2025, at Rock River Christian Camp, Polo, IL. Sign up today to get your child in on all the amazing fun!

4-H Camp is a five-day, four-night, residential camping experience that is conducted cooperatively by University of Illinois Extension staff in Boone, Carroll, DeKalb, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, Whiteside, and Winnebago counties along with the professional staff at RRCC.

Historically, parents have sent their children to 4-H Camp for a variety of reasons: to have fun, to make new friends, to develop new skills, to be physically active, and to appreciate nature. 4-H Camp is about way more than one week of fun. Sending a child to 4-H Camp will allow them to create memories they will carry through adulthood. 4-H camp teaches youth to make good decisions, build their self-confidence, become independent, and gain the ability to work well with others. These skills will help youth develop into strong adult leaders. In addition, 4-H camp counselors devote much of their time to ensure today's campers have the same great experience they did as children.

Campers at 4-H Camp will check in from 6 to 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, June 8, and check out from 6 to 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 12. During camp week, youth will engage in various activities designed to challenge, educate, and entertain. Two or three free-choice periods will be offered daily, including hiking, shooting sports, arts and crafts, crate stacking, team-building challenges, zip-lining, swimming, and more. Evening activities will be provided by the 4-H camp counselors and include campfires, a games night, and a dance or talent show. It is guaranteed to be a blast for everyone.

4-H Camp is open to all boys and girls that are ages 8-14 by June 8, 2025. 4-H membership is not required; however, all participants will



U OF I EXTENSION WEBSITE PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

**At a previous year's camp, Annalee Anderson, Evelyn Noller, and Ella Dittmar, Jo Daviess County 4-Hers, completed the Counselor in Training (CIT) opportunity available to campers 14 years old and planning to apply to be a camp counselor in the future.**

be expected to comply with the same high behavior standards expected of 4-Hers. Youth need to be interested and excited to have a week of outdoor fun away from television and technology.

The early bird cost is \$325 for 4-H members and \$375 for non-4-H members until March 1. After that date, the price goes up to \$350 for 4-H members and \$400 for non-4-H members. All camp fees must be paid in full by May 15.

Download a camper application online at [web.extension.illinois.edu/bdo/northern-illinois-4-h-camp](http://web.extension.illinois.edu/bdo/northern-illinois-4-h-camp), or register online at [go.illinois.edu/4HSummerCamp](http://go.illinois.edu/4HSummerCamp). Registration may also be made by calling the local office: Winnebago County at 815-986-4357; Jo Daviess County at 815-858-2273; Stephenson County at 815-235-4125; Ogle County at 815-732-2191; Boone County at 815-544-3710; DeKalb County at 815-785-8194; Carroll County at 815-244-9444; Lee County at 815-857-3525; or Whiteside County at 815-632-3611. Slots for boys' and girls' cabins will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

**About Extension**  
University of Illinois Extension develops educational



U OF I EXTENSION WEBSITE PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

**Karla and Scott Noller, from Stockton, are checking in their children, Alyssa, Evelyn, and Kyle, for a previous year's 5-day camp experience.**

programs, extends knowledge, and builds partnerships to support people, communities, and their environments as part of the state's land-grant institution. Extension serves as the leading public outreach effort for University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences in all 102 Illinois counties through a network of 27 multi-county units and over 700 staff statewide. Extension's mission is responsive to eight strategic priorities – community, economy, environment, food and agriculture, health, partnerships, technology and discovery, and workforce excellence – that are served through six program areas – 4-H youth development, agriculture and agribusiness, community and economic development, family and consumer science, integrated health disparities, and natural resources, environment, and energy.



U OF I EXTENSION WEBSITE PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

**Lane Vondran, a first-time camper from Scales Mound at a past year's camp, shows off the tie-dyed t-shirt he made during one of the arts and crafts "campivities."**

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# Appeals court keeps Illinois' assault weapons ban in place

## 7th Circuit blocks, for now, lower court's order that held the law unconstitutional

By Peter Hancock  
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

Illinois' assault weapons ban will remain in place, at least until a federal appeals court hears full arguments challenging a lower court ruling that found the law unconstitutional.

In a brief, two-page order issued Thursday, Dec. 5, a three-judge panel of the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago granted the state's motion to delay the order, noting that just a year earlier the circuit refused to grant a preliminary injunction blocking enforcement of the same law.

The order noted that while refusing to issue a preliminary injunction is not the same as upholding the law entirely, "the laws have enough support to remain in place pending the final resolution of plaintiffs' suit."

Illinois lawmakers passed the weapons ban in January 2023 in response to numerous mass shootings around the country in which AR-style rifles with large-capacity magazines were used. Among those was a deadly shooting at an Independence Day parade the previous summer in Highland Park.

The law bans the sale, purchase and manufacture of a wide range of firearms that are defined as "assault weapons," as well as large-capacity magazines and certain kinds of attachments, including those that increase the rate of fire from a standard semiautomatic weapon.

The new law was quickly challenged in multiple lawsuits in state and federal court. In August 2023, the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the law against claims that

See BAN, Page 13

# News briefs

## Blackhawk Unit of Home Extension

Blackhawk Unit of Home Extension will hold its January meeting on Thursday, Jan. 16, 2025, at 1 p.m. at the Pearl City Library. The roll call will be "Your least favorite cleaning chore". Judy Shippee will give the major lesson on "Making Your Own Cleaners". Raffle items will be brought by Karen Pohl and Kim Planz. Anyone can come to our meetings to see what we are all about.

## Salvation Army events

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 questions.

In addition to the clothing drive, the Salvation Army will host two more events in January. Women's Ministry, bible trivia, coloring, and fellowship will be held on Jan. 11 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Family Night will feature a dinner and movie on Jan. 25 at 5 p.m. and will feature Lady and the Tramp with spaghetti.

# Freeport police reports

## Felony burglary from a motor vehicle and identity theft arrest

On Dec. 27, 2024, an Officer with the Freeport Police Department was dispatched to a residence in the 800 block of E. Garden Street regarding a burglary from a motor vehicle complaint. During the course of the investigation, it was reported that various items were stolen from a vehicle that was parked inside of a detached garage. Some of the items stolen included three bank cards.

The victim discovered there had been unauthorized transactions on one of the bank cards at two locations in Freeport. The investigating Officer was able to review surveillance video from the transactions and was able to identify the suspect as James Brexton, a 54-year-old resident of Freeport.

Later in the day at approximately 11:07 a.m., James Brexton was observed in the area of W. Douglas Street and West Avenue. When Officers attempted to stop Brexton to talk to him, he took off running. Brexton was located a short time later in the area of Grove Avenue and Douglas Street and was placed under arrest. During a search of Brexton incident to arrest,

Officers located bank cards and other property that was reported stolen earlier during the burglary on Garden Street.

James Brexton was transported to the Police Department where he was processed. Felony charges of Burglary from a Motor Vehicle, Theft with a Prior Conviction, and two counts of Identity Theft were approved by the Stephenson County State's Attorney. Brexton was transported to the Stephenson County Jail where he is currently being held 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.

## Juvenile felony narcotics and firearm arrest

On Dec. 31, 2024, Officers with the Freeport Police Department conducted a search warrant at a residence in the 600 block of S. Benton Avenue. A 17-year-old juvenile male was present when the search warrant was executed. During a search of the residence, Officers recovered a loaded .22 caliber semi-automatic rifle, approximately 73.8 grams of suspected methamphetamine, and five separate baggies that contained approximately 292 grams of assorted suspected counterfeit narcotics.

The Stephenson County State's Attorney approved felony charges of Possession with the Intent to Deliver more than 15 grams, but less than 100 grams of Methamphetamine, and Possession of a Firearm Without Requisite FOID for the juvenile male. Additional charges are forthcoming pending laboratory analysis of the suspected counterfeit narcotics.

The juvenile male was processed and later taken to the Kane County Juvenile Detention Center where he will be detained pending further order from the court. 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.

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# FROM LENA'S KITCHEN



The not so skinny cook

The New Year has started, and we are fast approaching the middle of January. The cold has set in, so it is time for some heartier cooking. This week we have some soup, some casseroles, and some tasty desserts. Have a great week cooking.

## Chicken Bacon Ranch Skillet Dip

This appetizer is easy and uses a lot of things you may already have in your refrigerator and pantry. Use rotisserie chicken for an easy fix or canned chicken that has been drained. Enjoy this dip with vegetables, crackers, or pita chips.

- 2 pkg. (8 oz. each) cream cheese, softened, cut into 1-inch cubes
  - 1 pkg. (1 oz.) Ranch salad dressing
  - 1 C. chicken broth
  - 3 C. shredded cooked chicken
  - 2 C. shredded sharp cheddar cheese
  - 8 slices bacon, crisply cooked and crumbled
  - ¼ C. sliced green onions
- In a 20-inch nonstick skillet, cook cream cheese, dressing mix and broth over medium heat 3 to 4 minutes, stirring constantly, until smooth and creamy. Stir in chicken, cheddar cheese, and ¾ C. bacon until well mixed. Cook 3 to 4 minutes until heated through. Remove from heat, sprinkle with remaining bacon and onions. Serve warm.

## Pasta Fagioili Soup

Many Italian restaurants serve this soup. It is a great one for cold weather and makes a large batch for a group feed or for when you want leftovers.

- ½ lb. Italian sausage, crumbled
- 1 small onion, chopped
- ½ t. canola oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 C. water
- 1 can (15½ oz.) great northern beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (14.5 oz) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can (14.5 oz.) chicken broth
- ¾ C. uncooked elbow macaroni
- ¼ t. pepper
- 1 C. fresh spinach leaves, chopped

5 t. shredded Parmesan cheese

In a large saucepan, cook sausage over medium heat until no longer pink; drain and remove from pan. Set aside. In the same pan, sauté onion in oil until tender. Add garlic, and sauté 1 minute longer. Add the water, beans, tomatoes, broth, macaroni and pepper. Bring to a boil. Cook uncovered until macaroni is tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Reduce heat to low; stir in sausage and spinach. Cook until spinach is wilted, 2 to 3 minutes. Garnish with cheese.

## Ham and Potato Casserole

One of the hardest things in making escalloped potatoes is getting the potatoes done without drying up or getting too brown. This recipe parboils the potatoes before even starting the casserole. You can still be using up the New Year's Day ham that you have leftover.

- 4 lbs. potatoes, peeled and cut into ¾ inch pieces
- 1 t. salt
- ¼ C. butter
- 1 small onion chopped
- ¼ C. flour
- 2 C. milk
- 2 C. shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 t. salt
- ½ t. pepper
- 2 C. cubed cooked ham

Preheat oven to 350. Place potatoes in a large saucepan; add water to cover and sprinkle with salt. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer; covered, 8 to 10 minutes or until crisp tender. In a large skillet, heat butter over medium high heat. Add onion; cook and stir for 4 to 6 minutes until tender. Stir in flour until blended; gradually whisk in milk. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly; cook and stir 1 to 2 minutes or until thickened. Stir in cheese, salt and pepper until cheese is melted. Stir in ham. Drain potatoes; transfer to a greased 9 x 13 baking dish. Top with sauce. Cover and bake until potatoes are tender, 25 to 30 minutes.

Uncover and bake until potatoes are tender to a fork, 15 to 20 minutes longer. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.

## Hungarian Goulash

Many Hungarian Goulash recipes are casseroles made in the oven. This one is a crock pot version, so the prep can be made the night before and plugged in all day. I first learned to like this dish when I went to Europe. I didn't have it in Hungary, but I did have it in Austria. Enjoy this wonderful hearty dish.

- 3 medium onions, chopped
- 2 medium carrots, chopped
- 2 medium green peppers, chopped
- 3 lbs. beef stew meat
- ¾ t. salt, divided
- ¾ t. pepper, divided
- 2 T. olive oil
- 1½ C. beef broth
- ¼ C. flour
- 3 T. paprika
- 2 T. tomato paste
- 1 t. caraway seeds
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- Dash of sugar
- 12 C. uncooked egg noodles
- 1 C. sour cream

Place the onions, carrots and green peppers in a 5 qt. slow cooker. Sprinkle it with ½ t. salt and ½ t. pepper. In a large skillet, brown meat in oil in batches. Transfer to slow cooker. Add broth to skillet, stirring to loosen browned bits from pan. Combine the flour, paprika, tomato paste, caraway seeds, garlic, sugar and remaining salt and pepper; stir into skillet. Bring to a boil and stir for 2 minutes until thickened. Pour over meat. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 9 hours until meat is tender. Cook noodles according to package directions. Stir sour cream into slow cooker. Drain noodles; place in a large serving bowl and top with goulash mixture.

## Tres Leches Cake

This decadent and rich cake is often made in layers, but this one is actually a

poke cake in a loaf pan. It is easy to serve and delicious. It is a great dessert for any party.

- 1 C. flour
- ½ t. baking powder
- ¼ t. salt
- 5 eggs
- 1 C. sugar, divided
- 1/3 C. milk
- 1 t. vanilla
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 can evaporated milk
- ¼ C. whipping cream

## Icing:

- 1 pt. whipping cream
  - 3 T. sugar
  - Maraschino cherries
- Preheat the oven to 350. Spray a 9 x 13 pan with cooking spray until well coated. In a large bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, and salt. Separate the eggs. Beat the yolks with ¾ C. sugar on high speed until the yolks are pale yellow. Stir in the milk and vanilla. Pour the egg yolk mixture over the flour mixture and stir very gently until combined.

Beat the egg whites on high speed until soft peaks form. With the mixer on, pour in the remaining ¼ C. sugar and beat until the egg whites are stiff but not dry. Fold the egg white mixture into the batter very gently until just combined. Pour into the prepared pan and spread to even out the surface. Bake until a toothpick comes out clean, about 30 minutes. Turn the cake out onto a rimmed platter and allow to cool. In a small pitcher, combine the condensed milk, evaporated milk, and heavy cream. When the cake is cool, pierce the surface with a fork several times. Slowly drizzle all but about 1 C of the milk mixture. Then pour

the remaining cup around the edges to try to get as much around the edges of the cake as you can. Allow the cake to absorb the milk mixture for 30 minutes.

Icing: Whip the heavy cream with the sugar until thick and spreadable. Spread over the surface of the cake. Decorate the cake with whole maraschino cherries. Refrigerate any leftover cake.

## Stuffed Snickerdoodles

One of my favorite cookies is the snickerdoodle. This one takes it to a whole new level by putting a great stuffing in the middle. Enjoy this extended old time favorite cookie

- ½ C. plus 3 T butter, softened
- ¾ C. plus w T. sugar
- ½ t. baking soda
- ½ t. cream of tarter
- 1 egg
- ½ t. vanilla
- 1½ C. plus 1 T. flour
- 1/3 C. packed brown sugar
- 1 T. plus ½ t. cinnamon
- ½ t. salt

In a large mixing bowl, beat the ½ C. butter with a mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add the ¾ C. sugar, baking soda, and cream of tarter. Beat until combined, scraping sides of the bowl. Beat in egg and vanilla until combined. Beat in 1½ C. flour; chill the dough for 30 minutes.

For filling: In a medium bowl, combine the 4 T. butter and 1 T. flour, the brown sugar, 1 T. cinnamon, and ½ t. salt. Spoon mixture into a waxed paper lined plate and pat into a 4 x 2 inch rectangle. Cut rectangle into 14 pieces. Roll pieces into balls. Freeze for 10 minutes.

In a shallow dish, stir together the 2 T. sugar and the ½ t. cinnamon. Shape the cookie dough into 15 1½ inch balls. Flatten each dough ball with the palm of your hand to form a 2½ inch circle. Place a ball of filling in the center of each. Wrap dough completely around filling and roll into balls again. Roll in cinnamon sugar mixture to coat. Chill for 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 375. Place balls 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake until light brown 10 to 11 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

## Final Thoughts

As we march on into January, we encourage you to take advantage of all the wonderful places to eat in our area. We will be having some winter activities coming up. The Lena American Legion Auxiliary will be having a pie baking contest in February, so get your pie baking skills honed. Both boys and girls basketball as well as wrestling are in full swing. There are plenty of things to do. If we would happen to get some snow, there is cross country skiing and sledding at the lake. Have a great week and keep warm.

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 at [scoopshopper@rv-publishing.com](mailto:scoopshopper@rv-publishing.com) or by mail at From Lena's Kitchens, *The Shopper's Guide* at Rock Valley Publishing, 1102 Ann St., Delavan, WI 53115. Have a great week.



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# Military mindset guides Mercer County farmer

By Ali Preston  
FARMWEEK

In Mercer County, Zach Taylor's life revolves around two principles that have guided him through military service and farming: dedication and safety.

The lessons of readiness, awareness and attention to detail became second nature to Taylor, who enlisted in the National Guard the day after he turned 17. He left for basic training the day after graduating high school and turned 18 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

"It went pretty fast," he said of his time from enlistment to deployment.

Taylor initially enlisted as a 13 Bravo, or a Cannon Crew-member, then went into military police (MP) training. The following year, he was mobilized for Iraq as a Provisional MP.

"We transported around the prime minister of the country for a while, convoy security," he recalled. "You name it, we did it."

During his six years in the National Guard, Taylor learned that vigilance wasn't optional.

"Nothing would happen for a week, and everybody would get kind of complacent or relaxed," he said. "That's when things would go really, really bad."

When Taylor returned from Iraq, he faced a harsh reality: There was no family land left to farm.

"She didn't want me to have anything to do with that," he said, noting the challenges his mother and father had faced.

"Her and my dad started the farm in the '80s and ended up losing everything."

But agriculture was part of Taylor's identity. Growing up, he learned how to weld, repair equipment and work the land from his grandparents.

"I spent a lot of time in the shop with my grandfather. He was patient, always teaching me to figure out what was wrong and fix it," Taylor said. "I knew from a young age I wanted to farm."

So, with no family land, Taylor got a job in uniform as a civilian working as a mechanic at the Rock Island Arsenal and saved everything to invest in his own farmland.

"I started with hay and all kinds of little odds and end pieces," he said. He slowly expanded his operation with the help of friends and guidance from the Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC).

"They tried to make you look forward more," Taylor said of FVC. "I was just trying to get day to day, year to year. It was good in that aspect of trying to get you to look forward."

Today, he manages roughly 700 acres of corn, soybeans and alfalfa, alongside a 35-head cow-calf operation.

"It was never really meant to be what it is," he said of the growing operation. "That's what I told the banker the first time I borrowed money, that I don't ever plan to actually make a living off of the farm."

Taylor has spent the past 15 years working full time for Lock and Dam 17 in New Boston.

"If one of my kids wanted a job in agriculture, that would be it. If one of my younger kids decides they want to farm, I'll probably let them do it and I'll work for them part time," he said.

On the farm and in his career, Taylor's military-instilled focus on safety is ever present. He believes farming demands the same level of attention as a military mission.

"It's the same way with a firearm, tank, weapon, tractor ... they're all machines," he said. "Machines don't have feelings. If you tell them to do something, they'll do it—whether it hurts you or not."

Taylor ensures his children, Nathan (19), Mitchell (13) and Natalie (10), learn the same respect for safety. All three are active on the farm, including running equipment and showing livestock. And they've all heard their dad repeat the lessons he learned in the military.

"My kids have heard me say it 100 times—you can't take your eye off the ball," he said.

Though farming comes with its challenges, Taylor's unwavering commitment to safety ensures that the operation—and his family—thrives.

"You come from a culture where quitting isn't an option," he said of his time in the military and on the farm.

"Even things I wish he would," his wife, Jennifer, said with a laugh while sitting at the kitchen table next to him.

Whether it's operating ma-

chinery or guiding the next generation, Taylor's lessons in vigilance and safety ensure that both his family and farm are ready for whatever comes next.

"You just got to do it," he said. "And don't take any-

thing for granted."

**Editor's note:** This story is part of the *Cultivating Our Communities* campaign, a collaboration by Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton, Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Specialty Growers Association

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



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Zach Taylor poses on the farm with his kids, Nathan, Mitchell and Natalie. Taylor, a military veteran, applies his experience and discipline to implement safety measures on the farm, ensuring a secure environment for his family and operation.

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# Officials (Continued from page 2)

Bills from Cunningham and Hernandez would require state agencies to treat energy storage similarly to renewable energy. That includes authorizing the IPA to solicit energy storage developments and requiring the Illinois Commerce Commission and large utilities to develop plans for integrating storage into existing power systems.

Renewable energy groups and others interested in addressing climate change have urged quick action to prop up the nascent industry.

A study from Pruitt's consulting firm—which was supported by several clean energy trade groups—found that "immediate action is required" to allow time for new energy storage to be built before existing power plants go dark over the next 20 years. That study also found that while there would be upfront costs for electric customers in the first few years, it would save money in the long term.

A Union of Concerned Scientists report from November recommended that Illinois act quickly to get at least 3,000 megawatts of storage online by 2030 to reduce the risk of forcing the state to import fossil fuel-generated energy from other states.

"Across all scenarios, Illinois requires substantial energy storage development to meet long-term CEJA decarbonization goals," the report found.

Hernandez said she'd like to see such a bill move in the lame duck session. Cunningham echoed that sentiment but left the door open to the

issue taking longer to resolve. "It's definitely something we'll try to address in lame duck, but if not, it's something that will be top of list in the regular session," Cunningham said.

Pritzker pumped the brakes on a lame duck energy package in mid-December, telling reporters there "isn't currently some bill that's being put together" that would address a broad range of energy issues.

But the governor did signal support for energy storage legislation and a spokesperson later clarified Pritzker is aware of a smaller bill that is likely to come up in January.

"I think that would be an important topic for us to take up," the governor said of battery storage.

## Moving electricity around

The complex process of moving electricity from one place to another, and the federal regulators who coordinate that process, have also complicated CEJA's rollout. When electricity is needed, it must be moved from a power plant, solar farm or storage facility to its end user—like a household or factory. As new generation projects come online, new transmission lines must be built, like roads going to and from a freshly developed neighborhood.

Most grid operators face major backlogs for approving new generation projects. As of April, the two grid operators in Illinois—PJM Interconnection and the Midcontinent Independent System Operator—have almost 600 gigawatts of

generation capacity waiting to go online, according to a report from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. That's roughly equivalent to 600 nuclear power plants. These backlogs are due to a surge in interconnection requests over the past 10 years, leading to a slowdown in regulatory approvals for necessary infrastructure upgrades, including transmission lines.

Nationwide, generation projects that came online in 2023 averaged nearly five years waiting in the queue, up from three years in 2015 and less than two years in 2008, according to that report.

Clara Summers—who manages the "Consumers for Better Grid" campaign for the consumer advocacy group Citizens Utility Board—said PJM's interconnection queue is "particularly egregious," leading to problems with the local electricity market.

"The market can't work if the interconnection queue doesn't work and it hasn't for a while," Summers said

of PJM, which serves northern Illinois and much of the eastern United States. "That's something that just fundamentally needs to be fixed."

Electricity generation developers responded in a 2024 survey published by Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy that PJM's interconnection process makes other stages of development challenging, such as sourcing materials and financing.

The report suggested that federal regulators adopt reforms to generation development to ease interconnection, ranging from making it easier for new projects to be built at the site of retiring plants to reducing the requirements placed on energy generation developers before they're allowed to begin construction.

This problem reared its head over the summer when PJM held an auction to secure electric "capacity" for the upcoming year. These auctions are the mechanism by which grid operators ensure there is enough electricity generation

to meet future demand.

That auction set the price for capacity at \$269.92 per megawatt-day, twice the average over the past decade and more than 9 times higher than last year's price. PJM projects the total cost to provide electricity for the 2025-2026 delivery year to be \$14.7 billion, a \$12.5 billion jump from last year and a 35 percent increase over the second-highest annual capacity price.

That means prices for customers will increase by between \$7 and \$10 for the average household in the Commonwealth Edison territory in northern Illinois, according to the Citizens Utility Board.

CUB, the Illinois Attorney General and the attorneys general of several other states argued in a November complaint to federal regulators that the auction was artificially high because PJM undercounted how much electricity would be available in the future, among other reasons.

PJM has already filed rule changes for future auctions

in response to that complaint and others. Advocates called the filing a "major win" for customers in PJM's territory, though experts said the high prices still signify trouble for the grid.

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator, or MISO, operates the grid for much of the Midwest, including downstate Illinois. Earlier this month, it approved the next phase of its multi-year plan for long-range transmission lines. Those projects will cost an estimated \$21.8 billion and will move electricity around the Midwest.

James Gignac, a senior policy manager at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said this model should be considered by other grid operators—including PJM—to increase transmission line construction and put cheaper and cleaner energy on the grid.

"The quicker that we can get these long-range projects approved and moving toward

See OFFICIALS, Page 16



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# LEGAL 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:

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 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

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You can also visit The Judicial Sales Corporation at www.tjsc.com for a 7 day status report of pending sales.

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E-Mail: pleadings@il.cslegal.com Attorneys 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

STATE OF ILLINOIS IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COUNTY OF

STEPHENSON WISCONSIN BANK & TRUST, a Division of HTLF Bank,

Plaintiff, vs.

DYLAN SEVERSON a/k/a DYLAN THOMAS SEVERSON; BRITTNEY AUKOFER a/k/a BRITTANY AUKOFER a/k/a BRITTANY MICHELLE AUKOFER; UNKNOWN OWNERS and NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, Defendants.

Case No. 2024 FC 20

**NOTICE OF SALE**

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above-cause on August 16, 2024, an agent of the Stephenson County Sheriff's Office will at **9:30 a.m. on January 16, 2025**, at the Stephenson County Courthouse, 15 N. Galena Avenue, Freeport, Illinois 61032, sell at public auction to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate:

Part of the Northeast Quarter (1/4) of the Southeast Quarter (1/4) of Section 28, Township 29 North, Range 8 East of the Fourth Principal Meridian, more particularly described as follows: Beginning at a point on the East line of the Southeast Quarter (1/4) of said Section 28, said point being North 00 degrees 37 minutes 30 seconds East, a distance of 1592.78 feet from a Railroad Spike at the Southeast corner thereof; thence North 89 degrees 06 minutes 19 sec-

onds West, a distance of 361.48 feet to an iron rod; thence North 00 degrees 42 minutes 04 seconds West, a distance of 349.73 feet to an iron rod; thence North 89 degrees 53 minutes 13 seconds East, a distance of 215.12 feet to an iron rod; thence North 02 degrees 05 minutes 33 seconds East, a distance of 77.67 feet to an iron rod; thence North 89 degrees 32 minutes 12 seconds East, a distance of 152.51 feet to the East line of the Southeast Quarter (1/4) of Section 28; thence South 00 degrees 37 minutes 30 seconds West, along said East line, a distance of 434.65 feet to the Point of Beginning; situated in the Township of Oneco, County of Stephenson and State of Illinois.

Commonly known as: 12382 North Afolkey Road, Orangeville, Illinois 61060

Permanent Index Number: Part of 16-04-28-400-003 (New tax code for 2023: 16-04-28-400-005)

The property is residential property.

The judgment amount was \$159,879.90 together with interest thereon at the statutory rate plus additional costs, including publication costs, court costs, attorneys' fees and expenses of sale.

Sale Terms: 25% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the auction; the balance, in certified funds, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. The subject property is subject to general real estate taxes, special assessments, or special taxes levied against said real estate and is offered for sale without any representations 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.

Persons wishing information regarding the real estate may contact:

Jamie Rommelfaenger Heartland Financial USA, Inc.

655 S. Taylor Drive Sheboygan, WI 53081 (920) 208-4883

Dated this 16th day of December, 2024.

RENO & ZAHM LLP

By: /s/ Ryan T. Straw Ryan T. Straw,

Attorney for Wisconsin Bank & Trust, a Division of HTLF Bank, Plaintiff

RENO & ZAHM LLP Ryan T. Straw (#6297723) 2902 McFarland Road, Suite 400 Rockford, IL 61107 (815) 987-4050 rts@renozahm.com

(Published in The Shopper's Guide Dec. 25, 2024, Jan. 1 & 8, 2025) 465929

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COUNTY OF Stephenson - Freeport, ILLINOIS

Nationstar Mortgage LLC Plaintiff

vs. Krystle L. Schulz; Jeffrey S. Schulz; Unknown Owners and NonRecord Claimants Defendant

24 FC 24

CALENDAR

NOTICE OF SALE

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure entered in the above entitled cause Intercountry Judicial Sales Corporation will on January 29, 2025, at the hour 1:30 p.m., Security First Title Company, 205 West Stephenson Street, Freeport, IL 61032, sell to the highest bidder for cash, the following described mortgaged real estate:

LOTS THREE (3), FIVE (5), SIX (6) AND SEVEN (7) IN BLOCK THIRTY (30) IN THE VILLAGE OF DAKOTA, STEPHENSON COUNTY, ILLINOIS. EXCEPT THAT PART THAT LIES WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE RAILROAD. SITUATED IN STEPHENSON COUNTY IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS. P.I.N. 14-09-36-136-003.

Commonly known as 110 West South Street, Dakota, Continued on next page

# State could adopt 'kin-first' approach to foster care

By Amalia Huot-Marchand and Medill Illinois News Bureau

Illinois lawmakers could soon make it easier for children in foster care to live with their relatives or other people close to them.

Child welfare experts have long touted the benefits of foster children staying with kin. Advocates say those arrangements offer children more

stability, decrease the trauma they experience, improve their mental health and reduce the number of times the child is moved from home to home.

But both state and federal law often made those placements impractical. To get paid to support the children, relatives had to follow the same stringent rules that apply to other foster parents. They go through a rigid home inspection

with bedroom size requirements, as well as restrictions on the number of people and gender of individuals who can sleep in the same bedroom. Prospective parents also go through lengthy classroom training.

In 2023, though, the federal government decided to allow states to use separate standards for relatives of children in foster care than for other foster parents, in an effort to pair more children with relatives.

Now, Illinois lawmakers are moving forward with a plan to do just that, along with making other changes that will encourage the placement of children with relatives. The Illinois Senate unanimously approved the measure, known as the Kinship in Demand, or KIND Act, in the fall. But the House must sign off on the changes by the time it adjourns in early January, otherwise the bill must go through the entire legislative process again to reach the governor's desk.

"I think it's really important that we reckon with how unjust our systems have been in foster care," said state Sen. Mike Simmons, D-Chicago, one of the bill's 15 co-sponsors in the upper chamber. "It's an excellent step forward in terms of respecting the integrity of the families these kids come from, that includes their immediate family but also their extended kin that love them."

## Illinois' record

Close to 10,000 children—or more than half of the total number of kids in the care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services—live with family members.

But more than 60 percent of those families are not eligible for monthly foster care payments, annual clothing vouchers, or foster care support groups according to the ACLU of Illinois.

"Support for kin, for relatives who have not received the same kind of support that

foster parents do, for example—I'm talking about monetary support—I think is a very important component of dealing with the amount of time a child spends in the custody of DCFS. We want to make sure they get back to a home environment as fast as they can, and this is a way to encourage that," said Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker in a news conference on Dec. 11.

Casey Family Programs, the nation's largest foundation focused on foster care, states that prioritizing relative caregivers decreases sibling separation, reduces the risk of abuse and gives a higher chance of achieving permanency.

Placing foster children with relatives could also help Illinois do a better job in finding permanent homes for children in its care. Illinois' foster care system ranked in the bottom third of states in 2019 for children placed in permanent homes, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Between

2017 and 2021, the number of children who were placed in a permanent home decreased by 7.8 percent, according to the 2021 Child Welfare Outcomes Report to Congress.

See APPROACH, Page 15

## LEGAL NOTICES

Continued from previous page IL 61018.

The real estate is: single family residence. If the subject mortgaged real estate is a unit of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Condominium Property Act. Sale terms: At sale, the bidder must have 10% down by certified funds, balance within 24 hours, by certified funds. No refunds. The property will NOT be open for inspection. Prospective bidders are admonished to check the court file to verify all information.

For information call Sales Department at Plaintiff's Attorney, The Wirbicki Law Group LLC, 33 West Monroe Street, Suite 1540, Chicago, Illinois 60603. (312) 360-9455. W24-0212

INTERCOUNTY JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION intercountyjudicialsales.com 13257633

(Published in The Shopper's Guide Dec. 25, 2024, Jan. 1 & 8, 2025) 465921

## LIEN SALE

The following self-storage Cube contents containing household and other goods will be sold for cash by CubeSmart Asset Management, LLL as Agent for Owner #4409, 555 W. South Street, Freeport, Illinois 61032 to satisfy a lien on January 23, 2025 at approx. 1:00 PM at [www.storagetreasures.com](http://www.storagetreasures.com) Cube 1078 Cami McElroy; Cube 1100 Keeona Newton; Cube 1166 Anthony Quarker; Cube 1211 Jasmine Garcia; Cube 1297 Sherman Dean; Cube 1393 Christopher Mitchell

(Published in The Shopper's Guide Jan. 8 & 15, 2025)

## Ban (Continued from page 8)

it violated provisions of the Illinois Constitution. But the broader claims that it violates the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution are still a matter of legal dispute.

The various federal cases were eventually consolidated into three lawsuits – two in the Northern District of Illinois in Chicago and one in the Southern District in East St. Louis.

In April 2023, Judge Stephen McGlynn, of the Southern District, granted a preliminary injunction to block enforcement of the law while a trial of the case proceeded in his court, saying plaintiffs in that case were likely to prevail in the end. But two other judges in the Northern District denied identical motions, reaching an opposite conclusion about the prospects of the case.

Those three cases were then consolidated in the first appeal to the 7th Circuit, which ruled 2-1 in November 2023 that the preliminary injunctions should be denied. That decision was then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declined to hear the cases at this juncture, sending them back to the lower courts for full proceedings.

In September, McGlynn conducted a weeklong trial of the case in the Southern District, and on Nov. 8 handed down a decision declaring the law unconstitutional and enjoining the state from enforcing it. But he stayed the effective date of that order for 30 days, giving the state time to appeal.

Attorney General Kwame

Raoul's office appealed almost immediately and requested a stay of McGlynn's order. On Thursday, just a few days before McGlynn's order would have gone into effect, the 7th Circuit granted a stay, keeping the law in effect.

Meanwhile, the two other cases are still pending before different judges of the Northern District but have not yet gone to trial.

In its order Thursday, the 7th Circuit panel took notice of those other cases, where different judges have declined to issue preliminary injunctions.

"The state laws cannot be valid in some parts of Illinois and invalid elsewhere," the panel noted.

"This does not necessarily imply that the three cases will again be consolidated on appeal; we are reluctant to delay disposition of this appeal indefinitely just because similar litigation is pending in other districts," the order stated. "Still, the only way to preserve the status quo statewide is to enter a stay in this suit."

The panel included Judges Frank Easterbrook, Michael Brennan, and Amy St. Eve.

The panel noted that just this year, other federal circuits have reached similar conclusions in at least two other instances. Those included one in March when the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals refused to block enforcement of a Rhode Island assault weapons ban, and another in August when the 4th Circuit upheld a Maryland assault weapons ban.

*A Great Big*  
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# Approach (Continued from page 13)

## KIND Act's changes

The KIND Act would allow DCFS to pursue additional federal funding in order to apply a kin-first approach. DCFS would use the federal money to put more effort into finding families of foster children, notifying them and improving support services, as well as doing background and identity checks.

"By promoting kinship care and addressing systemic issues with a long length of time to permanency and insufficient support of foster care, the KIND Act aims to improve safety, stability and the well-being of children in DCFS care," state Sen. Mattie Hunter, D-Chicago, a primary sponsor of the bill, said during a November Senate Judiciary Committee hearing.

Payments for relatives particularly impact Black children, who are overrepresented in the foster care system.

In Illinois, as of October, more than 18,000 children were in the DCFS system; more than 8,000 of them were Black. In terms of proportional representation, Black children have a 250 percent higher chance of being placed in DCFS care, according to the School of Social Work at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

The poverty rate for Black Illinoisans is 27.7 percent compared to 8.5 percent for white Illinoisans. Preventing these families from accessing government subsidies for foster care adds on additional hardships and repeats the cycle of poverty they face, according to the University of Alabama Institute for Human Rights.

"We know that the vast majority of kids who are coming in are overrepresented, and the KIND Act is removing financial barriers for relatives being able to care for kids," said Nora Collins-Mandeville, director of systems reform policy at the ACLU of Illinois, in an interview.

"Relatives who are coming forward have considerably less resources than a foster parent would. And so the fact that we're not even, in our current system, paying those relatives the same amount that we pay a stranger to care for a child, it's pretty frustrating," she said.

Under the KIND Act, there would also be a different criminal background criteria for relatives and foster parents. The federal government allows DCFS to waive "non-safety-related licensing" for relative caregivers on a case-by-case basis. Relatives would be subject to a personal analysis assessing their criminal record and its potential impact on the child. The bill would allow DCFS to consider, for example, the overrepresentation of minorities in the prison system, especially for minor drug felo-

nies.

The foster care legislation would also require courts to oversee DCFS' implementation of the kin-first approach. Courts would have a larger role in family-finding efforts like monitoring whether DCFS complies with notifying relatives that a child has been removed from its parents' custody within 30 days. Plus, courts would be able to expedite emergency placements of children with relatives who are waiting for a custody hearing.

## Contentious history

The bill's sponsors called the measure historic because of the collaboration between DCFS and the ACLU, which have long fought each other over the state's care of foster children. In 1988, the ACLU sued DCFS in *B.H. v. Johnson*. Three years later, both parties entered a consent decree to reform DCFS to provide safer homes, reduce the caseload per employee, protect DCFS funding, allow more supervision and accountability, and improve caseworker training.

These efforts ran into severe obstacles through the years.

A two-year budget stalemate between Democrats in the General Assembly and Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner that ended in 2017 had a major impact on DCFS funding. It forced the agency to close many group homes throughout Illinois. This led to children under DCFS care being housed in places not designed to accommodate children in the long-term, including psychiatric hospitals, juvenile detention centers and shelters and even DCFS offices.

Since then, DCFS struggled to recover from the loss of funds in 2017 and hasn't implemented changes spelled out in the consent decree.

In light of those shortcomings, in 2018, the court appointed a special master to DCFS in order to ensure significant action was taken and to mitigate tensions between the ACLU and DCFS.

Pritzker, who defeated Rauner in the 2018 election, campaigned on the promise to reform the system. Since 2019, the DCFS budget nearly doubled from \$1.22 billion to \$2.03 billion, mostly to hire more staff and caseworkers. Despite these improvements, a Cook County judge continuously held DCFS director Marc Smith in contempt of court in 2022 for failing to find adequate placements for foster care children, some of whom were still residing in psychiatric hospitals. An appellate court later vacated the contempt citations, and Smith stepped down at the end of 2023. He was the 13th DCFS director in 10 years.

"For a good period of time, there wasn't stability in the agency's leadership at all. We

had turnover every year. It wasn't up until the Pritzker administration that we had a director there for multiple years. And so that can be really challenging. You have different priorities for every leader who comes in," Collins-Mandeville said.

Despite the turnover at the top and the agency's ongoing court battles, DCFS reduced the number of youths in care from 50,000 in 1995 to 16,000 in 2023. The number, however, has risen in the past year to 18,000.

"Today marks a day that

we had long hoped to see: the ACLU and DCFS are in alignment on a piece of landmark legislation that offers an essential opportunity to reform Illinois' foster care system," Collins-Mandeville said in her testimony to the Senate committee.

*Amalia Huot-Marchand is a graduate student in journalism with Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications, and a Fellow in its Medill Illinois News Bureau working in partnership with Capitol News Illinois.*

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 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).

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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

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TJSC#: 44-2874

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Case # 2019 CH 17  
I3258409  
(Published in The Scoop Today Jan. 8, 15 & 22, 2025)  
466454

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COUNTY OF Stephenson - Freeport, ILLINOIS  
Nationstar Mortgage LLC  
Plaintiff  
vs.  
Krystle L. Schulz; Jeffrey S. Schulz; Unknown Owners and NonRecord Claimants  
Defendant

## CALENDAR NOTICE OF SALE

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure entered in the above entitled cause Intercounty Judicial Sales Corporation will on January 29, 2025, at the hour 1:30 p.m., Security First Title Company, 205 West Stephenson Street, Freeport, IL 61032, sell to the highest bidder for cash, the following described mortgaged real estate:  
P.I.N. 14-09-36-136-003.

Commonly known as 110 West South Street, Dakota, IL 61018.

The real estate is: single family residence. If the subject mortgaged real estate is a unit of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Condominium Property Act. Sale terms: At sale, the bidder must have 10% down by certified funds, balance within 24 hours, by certified funds. No refunds. The property will NOT be open for inspection. Prospective bidders are admonished to check the court file to verify all information.

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intercountyjudicialsales.com  
I3257633

(Published in The Shopper's Guide Dec. 25, 2024, Jan. 1 & 8, 2025)  
465922

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COUNTY OF STEPHENSON WISCONSIN BANK & TRUST, a Division of HTLF Bank, Plaintiff,  
vs.  
DYLAN SEVERSON a/k/a DYLAN THOMAS SEVERSON; BRITTNEY AUKOFFER a/k/a BRITTANY AUKOFFER a/k/a BRITTANY MICHELLE AUKOFFER; UNKNOWN OWNERS and NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, Defendants.

Case No. 2024 FC 20  
NOTICE OF SALE

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above-cause on August 16, 2024, an agent of the Stephenson County Sheriff's Office will at 9:30 a.m. on January 16, 2025, at the Ste-

phenson County Courthouse, 15 N. Galena Avenue, Freeport, Illinois 61032, sell at public auction to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate:

Commonly known as: 12382 North Afolkey Road, Orangeville, Illinois 61060  
Permanent Index Number: Part of 16-04-28-400-003 (New tax code for 2023: 16-04-28-400-005)

The property is residential property.

The judgment amount was \$159,879.90 together with interest thereon at the statutory rate plus additional costs, including publication costs, court costs, attorneys' fees and expenses of sale.

Sale Terms: 25% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the auction; the balance, in certified funds, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. The subject property is subject to general real estate taxes, special assessments, or special taxes levied against said real estate and is offered for sale without any representations 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.

Persons wishing information regarding the real estate may contact:

Jamie Rommelfaenger  
Heartland Financial USA, Inc.  
655 S. Taylor Drive  
Sheboygan, WI 53081  
(920) 208-4883

Dated this 16th day of December, 2024.

RENO & ZAHM LLP  
By: /s/ Ryan T. Straw  
— Ryan T. Straw,  
Attorney for Wisconsin Bank & Trust, a Division of HTLF Bank, Plaintiff

RENO & ZAHM LLP  
Ryan T. Straw (#6297723)  
2902 McFarland Road, Suite 400  
Rockford, IL 61107  
(815) 987-4050  
rts@renozahm.com  
(Published in The Shopper's Guide Dec. 25, 2024, Jan. 1 & 8, 2025)

# Officials (Continued from page 11)

construction, the sooner we'll have that increased capacity for projects to be able to access the grid more quickly and at a lower cost," he said.

Several of the first round of MISO transmission line projects are currently under review at the Illinois Commerce Commission. While federal regulators limited states' authority in long-term planning earlier this year, state regulators still play an important role in procedural

approvals.

Cunningham filed a bill last spring that outlines several changes to transmission line regulation and incentives, though it's unclear if facets of it would be included in any energy legislation that moves quickly.

"We can incentivize transmission development in the same way we incentivize renewables and dedicate a portion of everyone's electric bill," Cunningham said.

### Data centers and demand

Illinois' grid problems are also exacerbated by a growing demand for electricity.

In recent years data centers and large-scale industrial and manufacturing development have boomed nationwide and especially in Illinois. Data centers, which are key for artificial intelligence development and other high-tech businesses, require massive amounts of electricity, as do manufacturing plants.

Illinois has been competing to land data centers by providing tax incentives to build

facilities here. Pritzker has said the data center tax credit helped move Illinois from "kind of middle of the pack to now becoming the third-largest data center market in the nation and the fifth-largest in the entire world."

But data center developments are already increasing demand in northern Illinois and hastening the need for greater electricity generation.

A report from the consulting firm Grid Strategies found that that demand for electricity will increase by 15.8 percent over the next five years, about a five-fold increase over nationwide growth es-

timates from two years ago. PJM territory is expected to see some of the largest demand growth, driven in part by an "unprecedented" increase in data centers.

For drafters of CEJA, the level of demand growth was unexpected.

"We knew that demand would go up," Cunningham said. "But the words 'data center' were never used in CEJA negotiations."

The Columbia University study of PJM's grid, meanwhile, recommended state-level changes to mitigate the risks of delays in getting renewable generation

online as demand increases.

"State regulators and other policymakers will also be wise to manage the phaseout of existing resources carefully," the report suggested. "One way of doing so is to build 'reliability safety valves' into environmentally driven retirement schedules."

In Illinois, that could mean state lawmakers and regulators now face difficult choices on an increasingly short timeline: increase costs to customers, back down from the state's most ambitious decarbonization goals or accept an increasingly unreliable grid.

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### Ashes (Continued from page 4)

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how God works to make all things work together for good. In fact, that's exactly what Romans 8:28 says. For we know that all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Until next week, God bless and Happy New Year!

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