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Vol. 21, No. 46

The Prairie News

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GETTING INTO THE SPIRIT

Reindeer cheer

Whispering Pines offers family holiday experience

By CELESTE HUTTES

Illinois Farm Bureau Partners

SHABBONA – Every morning, Randy and Beth Espe watch reindeer frolic outside their kitchen window as they sip their morning coffee – a delightful daily ritual they have fondly dubbed the rodeo.

Santa himself would envy their view. “When they go out into the pasture, they get giddy because it’s cool, and that’s their playtime,” Randy says of the reindeer. “They run, they jump, they kick, they spin. It’s pretty amazing to see.”

And so, the day begins at Whispering Pines Reindeer Ranch & Tree Farm in Shabbona, where the Espe family’s labor of love grew into a beloved holiday tradition for countless families.

Reining in holiday cheer

What might seem an unlikely retirement gig comes as a slight surprise to those who know Randy well.

“People would bring me abandoned and orphaned animals when I was young,” Randy says. “We raised a lot of raccoons,



Whispering Pines Reindeer Ranch & Tree Farm owner Randy Espe brings holiday glee to seasonal events with his reindeer. Photo by Nathan Lambrecht.

a pet fox, a little bit of everything. I always dreamed about raising whitetail deer at some point. But reindeer turned out to be a better choice because they are domesticated. You can snap a halter on them and walk them around on a lead rope – and you can just sit and love on

them.” His dream of deer became a reality after Beth retired from Northern Illinois University and Randy wrapped up a 40-year career in the seed business. As they started a second act in life, the couple set

Continued on Page 2

Toulon council passes tax levy EAV triggers 4.99% increase

By JOHN A. BALLENTINE

For The Prairie News

TOULON – The Toulon City Council approved a 2024 tax levy of \$226,050 during Monday’s monthly meeting.

The 4.99% levy increase is under the 5% threshold that would trigger a truth in taxation hearing. Aside from Board Member Brandon Simpson’s brief explanation of the levy, discussion on the matter was minimal at Monday’s meeting or during the board’s November gathering.

The council did discuss use of the former Faith Baptist Church building on East Vine Street for city police offices, a community room and meeting rooms.

And Christmas bonuses for city employees were approved after a lengthy discussion. Teresa Macy was awarded \$4,000 to compensate also for worked hours, James King \$1,000, Barb Cantwell will receive a delayed bonus next year, part-time employees will receive \$300 each and a lump sum of \$600 will be distributed to Toulon Police officers by Ron Jackson.

Continued on Page 2

Stark Co. Board split on chair, vice chair votes

By JOHN A. BALLENTINE

For The Prairie News

TOULON – Stark County Board members were split 4-3 on votes for the two-year positions of board chair and vice chair conducted during Tuesday’s monthly meeting.

Robin Nowlan nominated Kari Bush for chair with Bill Loane seconding the motion. A roll-call vote showed yes votes from Bush, Loane, Nowlan and

Board Member Joe Orwig. Casting no votes were board members Tom Howes, Adam Wilson and Jamie Schaffer. Tim McMillen was absent.

Next, Wilson was nominated for vice-chair with Wilson, Howes and Schaffer voting yes and Bush, Loane, Nowlan and Orwig voting no.

Nowlan was then nominated for vice-chair with Bush, Loane, Nowlan and

Orwig voting yes and Howes, Schaffer and Wilson voting no.

Howes expressed frustration with the state of affairs on the board, saying “Attendance – outside participation – I think these are important. I don’t think any of us are holding our committee meetings like we should. People don’t know who our county board chair is when I go to places.

“People need to be present and active because we are not moving forward as a board. We are not doing anything. We have 45-minute meetings and we run out of here to volleyball games, basketball games, whatever. That seems more important than the 5,400 people who elected and trust us to take care of their money and look out for them.”

Committee assignments



Kari Bush and Robin Nowlan are sworn in by County Clerk/Recorder Heather Hollis at Tuesday’s meeting of the Stark County Board. Adam Wilson was also re-elected but was not present for the photo and was sworn in later. Photo by John A. Ballentine.

will be made during next month’s meeting and board members can submit their

names for the various assignments. Committees are

Continued on Page 2



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RANCH: Espes began with Christmas trees

Continued from Page 1
aside 18 acres to grow the small Christmas tree operation they began years earlier on the family farm.

As Randy researched ways to promote Christmas trees, he discovered Hardy's Reindeer Ranch in Rantoul. He visited owner Mark Hardy for some tips and promptly fell in love with reindeer.

"In hindsight, I wish I had listened better to Mark," Randy says. "He told me to take all the money I was going to spend on Christmas trees and buy another reindeer or two. Reindeer have turned into our major focus, and they are actually less work than the Christmas trees."

Before buying any reindeer of their own, the Espes joined the Reindeer Owners and Breeders Association and the Reindeer Farmers Association to learn how to responsibly breed and care for reindeer. By 2018, they felt ready to welcome their first four reindeer from Alaska.



A close but more laid-back cousin to the caribou, reindeer represent a distinct subspecies and longtime friends to humans. Photo by Nathan Lambrecht.

Today, their herd numbers more than a dozen.

A close but more laid-back cousin to the caribou, reindeer represent a distinct subspecies and longtime friends to humans.

Far from their native lands in the Arctic and mountainous regions of eastern Europe, Siberia and Scandinavia, reindeer living in Illinois require special care. According to Randy, ticks and heat present the biggest challenges.

Reindeer delight in frigid winter weather. During warmer months, the reindeer typically stay in the barn throughout the day, emerging at dawn and dusk to graze in cooler temperatures.

Those amazing antlers – grown by both males and females – also present a serious safety hazard for reindeer. Sprawling like a tree canopy, the antlers can easily become wedged in a fence or gate.

The Espes have also learned reindeer have a magic all their own. With their friendly natures and impressive appearance, the Espes' reindeer often outshine Santa at the many holiday events they attend.

"The reindeer always create a lot of excitement," Randy says. "Kids just get giddy, and their eyes light up. It's heartwarming to see how much happiness they bring."

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association.

TOULON: Demolition set for 315 W. Jefferson St.

Continued from Page 1
Finally, Police Chief Gary Bent and city employee Matt Forstrom will each receive \$500.

City Attorney Kate Carter reported that on Friday the Stark County Circuit Court will consider a demolition order for 213 E. Greenwood St.

Bids were opened for demolition of the 315 W.

Jefferson St. house where Andrew Szparkowski has previously resided. NRE's bid was \$22,070 while Chris Baumann bid \$26,000, Gordon Whitaker \$38,000, Princeville's Elevation Septic Excavating bid \$23,000 and MTG Excavating was at \$26,500. The board accepted NRE's bid.

In other business, the council approved the schedule for 2025 council meetings and a \$250 donation to The Society of Growth, Inc., located in Wyoming.

Ben Leezer, of Toulon's Leezer Insurance Agency, presented a follow-up report concerning Toulon's insurance renewal. Leezer recommended Illinois Counties Risk Management Trust's quote of

\$56,199, which does not include cyber coverage. The council approved the quote.

No one showed up or sent in bids to replace the city's cemetery mausoleum's roof.

Mayor Larry Hollis set the New Year's Eve bar hours to be open until 1 a.m.

Toulon's Al Curry received permission to plant 25 oak trees southeast of the high school building. Curry receives the trees at no charge and doesn't charge for his services.

Toulon's Tax Increment Financing district will pay \$29,750 to Laverdiere Construction for installation of a foot valve in the city's water system and \$6,987 to Roto-Rooter for sewer-main work at the in-

tersection of North Washington Street and West Vine Street.

The city may borrow a flashing speed limit sign for Main Street that indicates a motorist's speed. Speeding on Main Street is a growing concern of the council, citizens and business owners.

Finally, the backup generator installed at the South Whittaker Street lift-station by Stark Excavating, the contractor on that project, was discussed. Stark said the generator is out of its service area so they won't do any work on it. No other company will service the generator either, so if there's a problem, Toulon will have to pay for a service provider if one can be found.

COUNTY: Board passes resolutions

Continued from Page 1
police, legislative, economic development, health board, road/bridge, and a newly created buildings committee. All board members serve on the finance committee.

Nowlan presented the county engineer report for County Engineer Judd Giffin. The new county highway building land acquisition was tabled to January's meeting. Bush said the new building com-

mittee will take over the highway building project from Giffin.

Treasurer Paula Leezer reported that wages are up because 2024 had 27 pay periods during the year. She also said that sheriff's office salaries are up, as well.

Sheriff Steven Sloan reported he is interviewing people for the secretary position because Betsy Colclasure is retiring next year.

The board approved several resolutions: 2025 calendar dates for meetings, a drug court resolution creating a collaboration with Marshall and Putnam counties, a comprehensive noxious weed work plan for 2025, Shannon Peterson's three-year appointment to the Human Services Transportation Steering Committee and a predictable-fee schedule stipulating costs for processing various documents.

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PUBLIC RECORD

Incidents & Accidents Stark County



12-3 - Abbie L. Burgess, 18, Princeville, was cited for speeding 72 mph in a 55 zone. Also charged in the same traffic stop was Taylor D. Caldwell, 26, Edelstein, for adult use cannabis by a passenger.

12-5 - Harassment and or threats were the source of a complaint received from a LaFayette resident in the 300 block of Hodgson St.

12-6 - Demetrio M. Ordas, 21, Bakersfield, Calif., was cited for disobeying a no passing zone, driving without a valid driver's license and operating an uninsured vehicle. He was issued a court date.

12-7 - Evan M. Boswell, 37, of Wyoming, was fined for driving while his license was revoked and for operating an uninsured vehicle.

12-8 - Swayde M. Gibler, 30, Geneseo, cited for driving on an expired registration for over a year. He was issued a court date to appear.

12-8 - Teresa R. Wilkins, 43, Wyoming, was cited for driving on an expired vehicle registration.

12-8 - George R. Knowles Jr., of Wyoming reported being the victim of a hit and run accident involving his 2019 Ford F-150.

Peoria County report

11-28 - A two-vehicle crash northeast of Galesburg resulted in hospital attention for five people, including four Galva residents.

Kayla A. Capps, 32, of Galva was driving a southwest-bound 2005 Honda Civic shortly before 5 p.m. on U.S. Route 34 at Knox Highway 37 when it struck a 2021 Dodge Challenger. Ronald E. Johnson, 70, of Galesburg was the other driver, according to a Knox County Sheriff's Office report.

Johnson was westbound on Highway 37 and turning left onto Route 34 but didn't see Capps' vehicle because its headlights were not on, the report stated. Capps said she didn't believe she needed headlights at that time of day.

Both drivers and Capps' three passengers - Lucas J. Gustafson, 39; Shandi S. Gustafson, 38; and a 15-year-old girl - were transported to OSF Saint Mary Medical Center in Galesburg. Capps was cited for not using headlights when required. Both vehicles were towed.

Galva Report

Officer dispatched:

12-2 - to the 700 block of NW 4th

St. to assist a citizen.

12-3 - to the 1200 block of SE 2nd St. to assist a citizen who had locked their keys inside a vehicle. Tarleton's Service was contacted and was able to unlock the door.

12-3 - to the 00 block of NW 5th St. for a verbal domestic disturbance.

12-3 - to assist Kewanee Police Department locate a subject in the 100 block of NE 9th St.

12-3 - to the 100 block of SE 8th Ave. for a parking complaint. The subject was waiting for a meeting and moved to a different location.

12-3 - to the 1000 block of North Center Ave. for a two-vehicle accident with damage only.

12-3 - to a residence in the 300 block of NE 9th St. to attempt to locate a wanted person. As the result, Amanda Robinson, 32, Galva, was arrested on a Henry County warrant for charges of five counts of possession of meth, two counts of possessing hypodermic needles and two counts of meth delivery. She was taken to the Henry County Jail.

12-4 - to the 500 block of SE 2nd St. to assist a motorist that had locked their keys inside a vehicle. Tarleton's Service was contacted and were able to unlock the vehicle.

12-4 - to the 1000 block of North Center Ave. for a 911 rapid SOS alert from a cell phone. It was determined to be a false alarm.

12-4 - to the 800 block of NE 3rd St. for an animal-neglect complaint.

12-4 - to a verbal domestic disturbance complaint in the 100 block of SE 2nd St.

12-4 - As the result of a traffic stop in the 300 block of N. Center Ave., Michael Gustafson, 56, Galva, was cited for operating a vehicle when registration suspended for mandatory insurance. He was released with a court date.

12-4 - to the 100 block of N. Center Ave. to remove a tree branch that fell into the roadway.

12-4 - to the 100 block of NE 6th

Ave. for a disorderly conduct complaint.

12-5 - to the 900 block of NE 2nd St. for a utility wire down complaint. The wire was determined to be a phone line. Frontier was notified for repairs.

12-5 - to the 200 block of NW 1st Ave. after a 911 call was placed. After investigating, Jacob Dailey, 21, Kewanee, was arrested for domestic battery. He was taken to the Henry County Jail.

12-6 - to the 300 block of SW 3rd St. to assist the Kewanee Police Department contacting a domestic violence victim. The subject decided not to prosecute.

12-6 - Steven Duckworth, 29, LaSalle, was issued a citation for speeding in the 900 block of N. Center Ave.

12-7 - to the north edge of town to watch for a reckless driver who was reportedly heading toward Galva. Officer was not able to locate.

12-8 - to the Exchange Street railroad crossing for a complaint involving a group of juveniles playing along the railroad tracks. Two juveniles were located near the area but denied being on the train tracks.

Property Transfers

12-2 - Marsha J. Hamilton to Heather M. Frykman - Pt Sect. 9-13-7 SE - Kissinger's Add'n to Castleton - Block 4 Lots 4, 5, 6 - Consideration = \$0.

12-3 - Joshua R. Leezer, Ind. Admin. and Thomas R. Leezer Estate to Joshua R. Leezer - Culbertson's Western Add'n Pt Block 2 Lots 1,2 & Block 3 Lot 8 - 525 N. Elm St., Toulon - Consideration = \$0.

12-5 - Anna L. and Douglas L. Stahl to Anna L. Stahl Und. 1/2 Int. & Douglas L. Stahl Und. 1/2 Int. - Pt Sect. 19-13-5 SW & Pt Sect. 27-13-5 NE - Consideration = \$0.

12-6 - Jody K. and Ralph R. Moodie to Jody K. Moodie, Trustee and Ralph R. Moodie, Trustee - Pt Sect. 23-14-7 SE - 16563 State Route 40, Bradford - Consideration = \$0.

Marriages

12-5 - Erick Michael Lloyd Rumbold and Maria De La Luz Torres Rincon - both of Wyoming.

12-5 - Steven Francis Odell, Bradford and Sue Ann Chaudoin, Normal.

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GUEST VOICES

POLL:
NEARLY 41% OF DEMOCRATS WANT TO HIT THEMSELVES IN THE HEAD WITH THE SAME HAMMER IN 2028.



Get some seeds, attract some critters

Deer were not cooperative Sunday morning as I sat high in a tree overlooking French Creek in scenic Knox County. But the beauty of sitting in nature long enough is that something will usually catch your eye, if you stay awake and attentive and ignore your cellphone.



Jeff LAMPE

Sure enough, as an otherwise slow morning neared an end, the cackle of a rooster pheasant caught my ears ... then my eyes. There not 50 feet away, a gaudy rooster floated into our prairie following a group of 9-10 hen pheasants.

Breeding season is months away, but those hens sure acted like they were avoiding the loud-beaked rooster. Once they landed, the hens scattered, some sprinting into the prairie, some for a nearby plot of sorghum.

Yes, there are still pheasants in central Illinois – a bird many people tell me they used to see but never do any more. Generally, those same people

offer up coyotes or hawks as causes for the lack of pheasants.

I nod along to be polite. And in truth, raccoons are a huge problem. But predators are not the main reason pheasants have become rare.

This Saturday (Dec. 14) in Yates City, a group of us can help you crack the pheasant code. Just stop by Salem Township Library between 10 a.m. to noon for the second Native Seed Celebration, spend a few minutes chatting and take home some native prairie seeds. That this year's gathering is sponsored in part by the University of Maquon botany department only adds to the excitement.

I'm not sure what other participants will bring to the free event, but my bounty so far includes prairie blazing star, two kinds of milkweed (butterfly and swamp), Indian paintbrush, white aster, bergamot, ironweed, Joe Pye weed and a grab-bag of seeds collected last summer and fall in Illinois and Iowa.

Other participants will no doubt offer other native seeds and maybe even some nuts for you tree growers.

Last year, we billed this as a seed exchange, which was a mistake.

Word was some folks stayed home, since they had no seeds to exchange.

Don't let that happen this Saturday. The event is open to folks who have something to swap, but also to any of you who want merely to sow a few native prairie seeds but don't have any to share.

And you don't need acres for your prairie planting. Even just a small space in your yard can be a great seedbed. Many seeds I collect come from a small, kidney-shaped bed in front of our Elmwood home that is busy all spring and summer with visiting bugs and birds.

No, you probably won't attract pheasants into town. But if you plant natives, you will see butterflies, goldfinches, hummingbirds and quite an array of cool insects.

Really, that's the goal of this event – to see more native plants growing on an Illinois landscape that has so few prairie plants left. That and the chance to swap a few tales with like-minded folks will make Saturday a success. So join in.

Contact Jeff Lampe at (309) 231-6040 or jeff@wklypost.com

'Drill, baby, drill' may mean 'lay pipe, lay'

If you believe in striking while the iron is hot, you got to love Summit Carbon Solutions' swift, decisive action on its multi-billion-dollar, CO2 pipeline just two weeks after Donald J. Trump, the nation's climate-denier-in-chief, was reelected Nov. 5.



Alan GUEBERT

On Nov. 14, North Dakota approved Summit's controversial plan to plant the pipeline across the Peace State. Earlier the state's Public Service Commission denied permission, effectively stopping the 2,000-mile, five-state pipeline from carrying CO2 from nearly 60 Midwestern ethanol refineries to a sequestration site in western North Dakota.

But the November approval quickly started dominoes falling. First to go was Iowa whose state utilities commission granted Summit the power of eminent domain to bury 600 or so miles of pipeline in the state only if both North and South Dakota granted Summit permission to cross their states.

So, one down, one to go.

Then, on Nov. 19, Summit "resubmitted its permit application to South Dakota regulators," noted the Iowa Capital Dispatch, "with what the company described as major re-routes.

They were needed. Like its northern neighbor, South Dakota had re-

jected Summit's first plan due to "non-compliance with county laws mandating minimum distances between pipelines and existing features," according to the Nov. 19 Des Moines Register.

That's a big deal with farmers and ranchers in a rural state targeted for 700 miles of CO2 pipeline.

If South Dakota approves the new plan, Iowa will fall in line and the \$9-billion pipeline may finally begin burying pipe and, with it, all its start-up woes. Two other state approvals, Minnesota and Nebraska, are not seen as troublesome.

But South Dakota farmers and ranchers aren't going anywhere quickly or quietly. Politically conservative President-Elect Donald J. Trump won the state in a 63-to-34% landslide on Nov. 5 and Gov. Kristi Noem has been tapped to serve in his Cabinet.

And rural anger over the pipeline was clear long before Trump's blow-out win. "Fourteen incumbent state legislators," reported The Register, "lost to challengers in the June primary election and their support of the controversial pipeline law was a factor in many races."

After anti-pipeline forces worked to fire the incumbents, they "gathered petition signatures and forced the (new) law onto the November ballot, where 59% of the voters rejected it."

Even after that double affirmation of local control, Summit maintains it will begin South Dakota pipeline construction in 2026 or 2027.

That seems unlikely if the now-em-

powered, well-organized farmers and ranchers mount legal challenges on the company's siting rules or its pursuit of eminent domain to move forward. Worse, if those fights proceed on a county-by-county basis, Summit's South Dakota fight could take years.

And it could face even bigger headwinds in Washington, D.C.

The incoming Trump Administration is less than thrilled with any current program or policy seen as a Biden holdover, a big government regulatory scheme, or almost anything green. The multi-year, multi-billion dollar carbon capture and sequestration policy – pushed by the Biden White House, passed by congressional Democrats, and central to Summit's success – tics all three boxes.

Still, the incoming administration might look beyond all those shortcomings if it deems the pipeline supportive of its boisterous "drill, baby, drill" plans for fossil fuels.

And it does if Summit downplays its green benefits to highlight what environmentalists have always seen as the pipeline's real purpose – to prop up the ethanol industry while delivering pressurized CO2 to North Dakota's Bakken frac oil field to "pump, baby, pump" more fossil fuels.

If, that is, South Dakota's farmers and ranchers say so.

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The Farm and Food File is published weekly throughout the U.S. and Canada. Past columns, supporting documents and contact info are at farmandfoodfile.com.

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Raw cannabis smell allows for vehicle search

Capitol News Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – The smell of raw cannabis in a vehicle gives police probable cause to search it, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled last week.

The ruling comes months after the court ruled the smell of burnt cannabis does not give police probable cause to search a vehicle, drawing a fine line for motorists and police to follow when evaluating legal possession of cannabis.

The 4-2 ruling by the court, with Republican Justice Lisa Holder White abstaining, found that an Illinois State Police trooper conducted a legal search of a car in which Vincent Molina was a passenger in December 2020, after the driver was pulled over for speeding on Interstate 88 in Whiteside County.

According to court documents, the trooper said he smelled raw can-

nabis in the vehicle and initiated a search. The trooper then found multiple joints in a cardboard box in the car's center console and cannabis in a sealed plastic container in the glove box. Molina was charged with a misdemeanor for illegal possession of cannabis.

A circuit court initially ruled in Molina's favor, finding the search was unreasonable because Illinois law allows people over age 21 to possess recreational cannabis. But an appellate court and the Illinois Supreme Court disagreed with that ruling, citing the state's laws for how cannabis should legally be possessed in a vehicle.

Illinois law requires cannabis to be in a "sealed, odor-proof, child-resistant cannabis container" when in a car and for it to be "reasonably inaccessible while the vehicle is moving."

Neville wrote the trooper made a "reasonable inference" that the smell meant cannabis was illegally possessed.

The Illinois Supreme Court unanimously ruled in September, with White abstaining, that the smell of burnt cannabis does not indicate a crime has been committed and does not give police probable cause to search a vehicle. Though a state trooper found a gram of cannabis in the car at the center of that case, the driver exhibited no signs of impairment, and the trooper should not have searched the vehicle, the court concluded in an opinion authored by Neville.

Justice Mary Kay O'Brien wrote a dissenting opinion in Molina's case, joined by Chief Justice Mary Jane Theis.

Pages From the Past Compiled by John A. Ballentine

10 Years Ago in 2014

- Valerie Wagher of Toulon retires after 25 years of service with the Stark County Clerk's Office as deputy clerk. Heather Hollis replaced Wagher.
- Al Curry of Toulon becomes the newest board member of the Stark County Board of Supervisors.
- Discussions continue on a proposed agreement between the City of Toulon and Stark County Ventures, LLC to provide \$310,000 in city tax increment financing to rebuild a new structure in place of the burned-down grocery store on Main Street.
- Stark County High School senior and quarterback Joe Charvat was voted to the 2014 all-state football team.

25 Years Ago in 1999

- Raymond and Pauline Seckman of Toulon celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Dec. 15.
- Three Toulon apartment duplexes were renovated that are still at the

East Main Street location.

- The Bradford School Board discusses a merger with the Stark County School District.
- Toulon's John Cover received a 50-year pin from the Toulon Masonic Lodge.
- 35 Years Ago in 1989**
 - U.S. Senator Paul Simon held his 361st town meeting Dec. 20, in Toulon. Simon was in his first term as U.S. Senator.
 - Wyoming High School faced a football cooperative with either Toulon-LaFayette High School or Princeville High School.
 - Beth Prindiville is the DAR winner at Wyoming High School, having been awarded the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen Award.
 - Jim Nowlan is the featured speaker at the 70th Annual meeting of the Stark County Farm Bureau.
- 40 Years Ago in 1984**
 - No newspaper was published in

Stark County from mid-1984 to 1987.

50 Years Ago in 1974

- Ben Carmack Ford in Wyoming advertised a white 1968 Ford Mustang two-door hardtop for \$1,195.
- A new Toulon fire station was to be constructed on North Franklin Street across from Wrigley's Grain Elevator.
- A break-in at Wyoming's Johnson's Drug Store failed after would-be burglars were scared off when they attempted to chop a hole in the building's roof.
- Three high schools – Western, Manlius and Walnut – announced they would leave the Blackhawk Conference effective 1976. The Blackhawk Conference began in 1935 with charter members the Bradford Panthers, Galva Wildcats, Toulon Trojans, Wethersfield Flying Geese and Wyoming Indians.



Those we love can never be more than a thought apart, for as long as there is memory, they'll live on in the heart.

Three long years without his smile, No goodbye or answers why, Love you Jordan, rest on high!



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David L. Cover

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BRIEFS

Stark school district discusses levy options

WYOMING – The Stark County School Board's building/finance committee met Dec. 2 to discuss tax levy options previously presented by Superintendent Brett Elliott.

In November Elliott said three percentages were possible for the tax-levy increase: 4.99%, 9% or 10%. At the time, the board approved the 10% increase.

According to unofficial minutes of the committee meeting, "After further research, it is recommended to reduce the originally anticipated EAV increase from the prior year from 10% to 7%.

"This will reduce the amount of potential tax dollars available and decrease the tax burden on the community."

The finance committee recommended a 7.99% increase in funding compared to the original 10% increase approved in November on the tentative tax levy.

No action was taken at this meeting.

— John A. Ballentine

Bradford School Board passes tentative levy

BRADFORD – The Bradford School Board approved a preliminary 2024 aggregate levy of \$4,500,000 at its Nov. 26 meeting. Formal approval of the levy will come at the December meeting.

The aggregate levy is the total levy minus any bonds.

Due to increased equalized value of property in the district increasing by more than 5% and the school district increasing its levy request to capture all of that increase, Bradford will hold a truth in taxation hearing on Dec. 16 at 7 p.m. in Bradford Grade School.

Superintendent Chad Gripp noted the school district tax rate is not changing, just the EAV.

The board also approved hiring Maggie Suddeth as an elementary teacher starting in January and Lacy Jackson as a fifth-grade teacher starting in August.

In other business, the board approved intergovernmental agreements with Stark County and Bureau Valley high schools and with Stark County Junior High School.

The board also voted in favor of a snow-removal agreement with the Village of Bradford and recognized Dorothy Lord Memorial Reading Winners Braxton Schmitt, Charlie Wilson, Abigail Cade, Carter Divert, Stella Brady, Michael Divert



Pictured above, Santa made his appearance at the end of the Christmas parade held earlier this month in Galva. Photo by Carol Townsend.

and Schuyler Garlisch.
Lucia Nights starts Friday in Bishop Hill

BISHOP HILL – Historic Bishop Hill invites visitors to join the 2024 Lucia Nights (Festival of Lights) celebration on Friday, Dec. 13, and Saturday, Dec., 14 from 6-9 p.m.

This Swedish tradition is based on a legend of Saint Lucia, Queen of Light. During a famine in Sweden, on the longest and darkest night of the year, Lucia appeared wearing a long white robe and a crown of candles. Legend has it that Lucia appeared on a ship laden with food.

Girls in Sweden today wake their families on Dec. 13 carrying a tray of Lucia buns while dressed in a white robe and wearing a crown of candles.

Friday, Dec. 13

- Christmas tree lighting at 6 p.m. in the village park.
- Soup and chili supper at the Bishop Hill Community United Methodist church at 4 p.m. until food runs out. A free-will donation is appreciated.
- Peoria Cooperative Academy Madrigal Singers at the Bishop Hill Methodist Church from 6:30-7 p.m.
- Vasa National Archives closing reception for its exhibit, with storyteller Brian "Fox" Ellis sharing Christmas stories from 6-8 p.m.
- Hammer and Pick play at the Steeple Building starting at 6 p.m.
- At the Prairie Arts Center, Deirdre and Fiona Light perform holiday music from 6-7 p.m.
- Galva High School Choir will carol from building to building.
- At the Creative Commons, the Bishop Hill High Society Band will

perform from 6-7 p.m., followed by Coffee Creek from 7-8:30 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 14

- Soup and Chili Supper at the Bishop Hill Community United Methodist Church at 4 p.m. until food runs out. A free-will donation is appreciated.
- Peoria Cooperative Academy Madrigal Singers at the Bishop Hill Methodist Church from 6:30-7 p.m.
- Vasa National Archives closing reception for its exhibit, with storyteller Brian "Fox" Ellis sharing Christmas stories from 6-8 p.m.
- Hammer and Pick play at the Steeple Building starting at 6 p.m.
- At the Prairie Arts Center, Deirdre and Fiona Light will perform holiday music from 6-7 p.m.
- Cambridge High School Choir will carol from building to building.
- At the Creative Commons, Coffee Creek plays starting at 6:30 p.m.
- At the Colony School, there will be an old-fashioned barn dance, with Sangamo Stemwinders performing and Gail Hintze calling. Beginners are welcome and no partner is necessary.

Burns Boosters meet at Sheffield Meat Locker

SHEFFIELD – On Nov. 17, the 4-H group Burns Boosters met at the Sheffield Meat Locker. Prior to the meeting, members toured the facility and were given an overview of the locker's process.

Following the tour, the meeting commenced. During new business, a Christmas party committee was formed, to begin planning right after the meeting. The next meeting will be Dec. 15 for the Christmas party.

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Assault weapons ban kept in place

Capitol News Illinois
SPRINGFIELD – 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 on 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 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.



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LEGAL ADS

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT, TENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, STARK COUNTY, ILLINOIS

CAUSE NO. 2024TX7 TO THE FOLLOWING NAMED PERSONS (AND IF DECEASED, TO THEIR UNKNOWN HEIRS AND DEVISEES), AND TO THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, AND TO ALL INTERESTED DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES THEREOF, INCLUDING AMONG OTHERS ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE, ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL, ILLINOIS DEPT OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY, STATE OF ILLINOIS DEPT OF HEALTHCARE & FAMILY SERVICES (PUBLIC AID) GENERAL COUNSEL AND STARK COUNTY CLERK, STARK COUNTY TREASURER, CITY OF TOULON, STARK COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY, AND TO OCCUPANTS, UNKNOWN OWNERS AND PARTIES INTERESTED IN THE PARCELS HEREINAFTER NAMED:

Parcel Number	Owners/Parties Interested	Cert Number	Street Or Common Address
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03-18-304-002	MCCURDY, ALLAN DEAN WARD	202100013	109 JACKSON ST.
04-36-200-006	RIVERSIDE PROCESSING CO INC A/K/A RIVERSIDE PROCESSING, INC. PRES: W GALE PHEIFFER	202100026	STATE ROUTE 17 & TOWNSHIP ROAD 700
04-36-200-006	PRINCEVILLE STATE BANK	202100026	STATE ROUTE 17 & TOWNSHIP ROAD 700

TAKE NOTICE THAT THE ABOVESAIID PARCELS WERE SOLD ON OCTOBER 25, 2022, FOR GENERAL TAXES FOR THE YEAR 2021 AND PRIOR YEARS, AND THAT THE PERIOD OF REDEMPTION FROM SUCH SALE EXPIRES MAY 19, 2025. TAKE FURTHER NOTICE THAT A PETITION FOR ORDER DIRECTING ISSUANCE OF TAX DEEDS HAS BEEN FILED IN THE ABOVE SAID CAUSE AS TO THE ABOVE-NAMED PARCELS BY STARK COUNTY, AS TRUSTEE, AND THAT ON JUNE 20, 2025 AT 11:00 AM [COURTROOM 1], SAID PETITIONER WILL APPLY FOR AN ORDER THAT A TAX DEED ISSUE AS TO EACH ABOVESAIID PARCEL NOT REDEEMED ON OR BEFORE MAY 19, 2025. /S/ STARK COUNTY AS TRUSTEE, PETITIONER.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT THE COUNTY CLERK
ADDRESS: 130 WEST MAIN, TOULON, IL 61483
TELEPHONE: (309) 286-5911
Published 12/6, 12/13, 12/20/24

VALLEY TOWNSHIP PUBLIC NOTICE Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2024

Road & Bridge District

Cash Receipts

Property tax \$117,511, state replacement tax \$7,225, interest \$168, and TOIRMA refund \$359. Total cash receipts \$125,263.

Cash Disbursements

Ag View FS \$7,179, Martin Equipment \$10,311, Morton Community Bank \$36,250, Potter Spray Patching \$11,305, Roger Potter Jr. \$9,975, TOIRMA \$2,468, wages under \$25,000 (T. Down, G. Schaffer): \$3,730, cash disbursements under \$2,500: \$1,007. Total cash disbursements \$82,225

	Road & Bridge	Bridge Construction	Building and Equipment	TOTAL
Balance March 31, 2023	\$158,621	\$123,747	\$48,092	\$330,460
Cash Receipts	106,097	11,113	8,053	125,263
Cash Disbursements	(82,222)	(1)	(2)	(82,225)
Balance March 31, 2024	\$182,496	\$134,859	\$56,143	\$373,498

Town Fund

Cash Receipts

Property tax \$64,261, state replacement tax \$1,278, interest \$91, TOIRMA refund \$332, and other income \$2,846. Total cash receipts \$68,808.

Cash Disbursements

Ameren \$1,207, J. Dienst \$2,251, JD Belcher \$6,775, TOIRMA \$2,279, Wages over \$25,000 (N. Schaffer) \$27,083, Wages under \$25,000 (A. Streitmatter, J. Dienst, J. Scholl, R. Bush, J. Streitmatter, P. Kieser): \$7,420, and cash disbursements under \$1,000: \$7,334. Total cash disbursements \$54,349.

	General	General Assistance	Special Revenue	TOTAL
Balance March 31, 2023	\$174,570	14,195	\$-	\$188,765
Cash Receipts	58,856	3,923	6,029	68,808
Cash Disbursements	(45,820)	(2,500)	(6,029)	(54,349)
Balance March 31, 2024	\$187,606	\$15,618	\$-	\$203,224

Subscribed and sworn to this 14th day of November 2024, I, Joyce Scholl, Supervisor of Valley Township, County of Stark, State of Illinois, do certify that the above is a true copy of the annual treasurer's report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

Joyce Scholl, Supervisor

Published 12/13/24

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT HENRY COUNTY, ILLINOIS

ESTATE OF KEITH D. ORR,
Deceased.
No. 2024P121

CLAIM NOTICE (Publication)

Notice is given of the death of Keith D. Orr. Letters of Office were issued on November 26, 2024 to Dianna Orr and Lorie Manthe as Independent Representatives whose attorneys are Barash & Everett, LLC.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the office of the clerk of court, Henry County Courthouse, Cambridge, Illinois, or with the representative, or both, on or before June 5th, 2025. Any claim not filed by that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed. E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider.

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Published 12/13, 12/20/24, 1/3/25

...

Illinois better prepared for recession than in past

By BEN SZALINKSKI

Capitol News Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – State lawmakers will face a projected budget deficit and slowing revenue when they return to Springfield in January, but a new report shows fiscal decisions made in recent years have put Illinois in a better position to handle a recession than any time in recent decades.

No state is immune from the negative effects of an economic downturn, but Illinois is more prepared today than it was for the Great Recession of 2007-2009 or the COVID-19 recession of 2020, according to a new report from the Illinois Economic Policy Institute and University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Project for Middle Class Renewal.

The report analyzed nine indicators of progress, such as fund balances and past due bills, that would help the state weather a future economic downturn.

"Illinois is better positioned to overcome challenges and withstand the forces that trigger recessions than at any other point in recent history," ILEPI economist Frank Manzo told Capitol News Illinois.

The main reason Illinois is more prepared is because it eliminated its backlog of unpaid bills in the years since the state's budget impasse ended in 2017. The backlog had reached nearly \$17 billion at the height of the two-year impasse between Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner and Democrats in the General Assembly. But it now sits generally between a \$2 billion to \$3 billion range, putting it in line with a standard 30-day billing cycle.

Illinois has enjoyed nine credit upgrades collectively from the three major credit rating agencies since the impasse, as bills are now paid by the comptroller when they arrive each month. "Those higher credit ratings allow the state to borrow money at lower interest rates, which save money for Illinois taxpayers. Lower General Fund deficits and better credit ratings put Illinois in a much better position to reduce the depth and severity of the next recession," the report stated.

A healthier reserve fund also provides the state with more money to fund operations if revenue dips. The Budget Stabilization Fund, more commonly known as the "rainy day" fund, had a balance of \$2.2 billion as of Dec. 2. That's a major improvement from 2007 when the fund had just \$276 million available, enough to fund the state for four days, according to the report. But researchers also said Illinois should follow a Fitch Ratings recommendation to set aside \$3 billion to \$5 billion in reserves.

Researchers also credited the state's recent decisions to increase annual payments into state pension funds when surpluses allowed for it. In fiscal years 2022 and 2023, the state contributed \$700 million more in total to its pension funds than was required by law, helping to slow the growth of unfunded liabilities.

The pension systems were collectively

funded at 46% at the end of fiscal year 2024, according to the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability. That's an improvement from 44.6% funded last year and the highest ratio since 2021 when the state enjoyed strong investment returns. However, unfunded pension liabilities grew by \$1.5 billion in FY24 to \$143.7 billion. The liability has continued to grow after briefly declining in 2021.

The pension payment required by law each year, meanwhile, will consume about 19 percent of the state's general revenue spending in FY25.

Still, a separate report from COGFA showed Illinois lags the nation in new job growth when compared to pre-pandemic job levels in fall 2019. The state has recovered all the jobs lost during the pandemic, but has only added about 29,000 jobs since October 2019, an increase of 0.5% compared to the national rate of 4.9%, according to COGFA Chief Economist Benjamin Varner.

The Champaign-Urbana and Bloomington metropolitan areas are the only ones in Illinois to surpass the national job growth rate since the pandemic, logging growth numbers of 8.4% and 7.3% respectively, according to COGFA. The Champaign area, with the University of Illinois' main campus, benefited as a hub of government employment while Bloomington has seen new manufacturing growth.

The Chicago area saw 0.3% growth and made gains in the private education and health services sector, but lost hospitality jobs. The Kankakee metropolitan area saw the largest decline since 2019 with total employment down 5.2%.

Researchers with ILEPI and UIUC also noted Illinois has a new tool to mitigate job losses when the next recession hits. Illinois implemented a work-share program that allows employers to temporarily reduce employees' hours and receive partial unemployment benefits to help avoid layoffs. It was created in 2015, but the state didn't implement it until 2021. NPR Illinois previously reported it could have saved up to 124,000 jobs and reduced unemployment costs by \$1 billion during the 2020 recession.

Replenishing the state's unemployment insurance trust fund after the pandemic, increasing investments in public education, passing an infrastructure bill, climate resilience projects and embracing a Medicaid expansion under the federal Affordable Care Act all help create jobs and financial security for residents, which creates more stability in the state's economy, according to the report.

But the report also suggested state lawmakers should review Illinois' tax structure. Researchers wrote the state's flat income tax structure and local reliance on property taxes is more resilient than other tax systems to a recession, but the lack of robust sales taxes on services creates more vulnerability.

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will not publish on December 27th.
The ad deadline for the January 3rd edition
will be Friday, December 27th, at noon.
Merry Christmas!

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SPORTS: Lady Rebels have won 4 of 5

Continued from Page 12
2023-24 season.

"He looked very natural and relaxed out there, and that was just awesome to watch," Mastin said.

Not so awesome, perhaps, was the overall shooting. Brimfield finished 13-for-49 from the floor and 2-for-16 on 3-pointers. Stark County appeared to be in the same ballpark.

"We just threw a major clunker, and it's hard to explain," Brimfield Coach Scott Carlson said.

Brady Johnson had 13 points to lead Brimfield. Ross Saner had 11 points for Stark County.

"As ugly as it was, this was one of my early crowning achievements with this group," Mastin said. "They played their tails off."

Following a game scheduled for Thursday night at North Fulton, Stark County plays at 2:30 p.m.

Saturday (Dec. 14) at Lowpoint-Washburn.

• **Galva boys** – MJ Louck had 24 points to lead Galva (5-1) to a 54-39 victory Dec. 6 at North Fulton. Blake Stahl had eight rebounds and JP Sloan had seven points, five rebounds and five assists.

Galva played again Tuesday night at home against Peoria Heights. The Wildcats aren't to play again until Dec. 19, at LaMoille/Ohio.

• **SC girls** – The Lady Rebels (4-3) saw a four-game win streak snapped on Monday in a 63-32 loss at Knoxville. Emily Demetreon led SC with 10 points and Kenna Newton added eight.

Prior to that, Stark County had won at home against Kewanee on Dec. 7 (43-39) and Bureau Valley on Dec. 4 (43-30).

Against Kewanee, Coley Johnston scored eight of her team-high 23 points as

Stark County held off a late rally. Sophie Finnegan added 10 points.

Finnegan led the way for the Lady Rebels against Bureau Valley, scoring all 10 of her points in the second half as Stark County rebounded from a 15-13 halftime deficit.

Addy Westphal scored nine and Demetreon and Johnston tallied eight apiece in the victory.

The Lady Rebels are home vs. Putnam County on Dec. 18.

• **Galva girls** – The Lady Wildcats (2-7) earned a second victory of the year on Dec. 5, winning 50-41 at Lowpoint-Washburn.

Galva lost on Tuesday at Henry-Senachwine, 55-20.

The Galva girls are home against Peoria Heights on Tuesday (Dec. 17) and Wednesday (Dec. 18).

IHSA adjusting classification schedule

The Illinois High School Association Board of Directors on Monday voted to begin using a one-year classification cycle instead of the current two-year cycle.

As a result, the IHSA will use enrollments collected by the Illinois State Board of Education in September 2024 to determine a school's classification for the 2025-26 school year.

In a press release, the IHSA said its

board "has heard the concerns from the public, and more importantly, from our member schools in the days since the completion of the IHSA's fall state tournaments."

And in 2025, the IHSA board said it plans to "delve deeper into all aspects that impact IHSA classifications."

The Prairie News
will not publish on December 27th.
The ad deadline for the January 3rd edition
will be Friday, December 27th, at noon.
Merry Christmas!

Super Crossword

ACROSS

1 The United States' landmass, with "the"
9 Rafter's challenge
15 Shul scroll
20 Another similar thing
21 Barack and Michelle
22 Give the slip
23 Like babies who throw tantrums when you try to put diapers on them?
25 News outlets
26 RBI or ERA
27 Film lead-in to "Cop"
28 Photo —
29 More nimble
30 Trellis climber
32 Having a sore mouth from working long hours at a kissing booth?
36 Joint a sock often covers
39 Chipped in, in poker
40 Beckett title character
41 Intense fire used as an energy source?

46 Pie — mode
49 Abbr. on a road map
50 With 44-Down, decay of building timbers
51 Colon part
52 Communist Joseph
55 Egyptian god of the dead
57 Declaration while pointing at a group of workers on strike?
62 Scent sensor
63 George at Gettysburg
64 Airy melody
65 Statement when you're nearly ready to complete a collage?
72 The "A" of "A-Rod"
73 Depart
74 Air out
77 Mesmerizing horse movement?
83 Limb-bending muscle
85 Is theatrical
86 Pod item
87 Color grade
88 Actress
89 Gasteyer
90 Inherent hanging-down position?
96 SeaWorld whale, once
100 Fake identity
101 Fuels (up)
102 "It won't hurt to snoop a little!"
107 Body of eau
108 Kind of acid in vinegar
109 Debt note
110 Architect
116 St. — (Caribbean getaway)
117 Hassle of tracking down a missing retirement payment?
121 Vintage song
122 Stress
123 Spiritual self
124 Foundations
125 Peanut butter cup brand
126 Bread browners

DOWN

1 Cobra types
2 Castle ditch
3 Avenger Peel
4 Lizard, e.g.
5 British verb suffix
6 Indian dish
7 Height: Prefix
8 The whole —
9 King, in Caen
10 Belly muscles
11 Jean — (perfume brand)
12 Windows ad catchphrase
13 Language of Copenhagen, to locals
14 New jet in '68
15 Worked as an office sub
16 Carry too far
17 Howard
18 Stem's area
19 Bodily pump
24 Conductor Georg
29 "Every seat sold" abbr.
31 "La Traviata" composer
33 Spy novelist
34 Shareable PC file
35 Vainglory
36 Chef's tie-on
37 "Untrue!"
38 Maryland congressman — Mfume
39 Even a bit of
42 Taxing gp.
43 Mag bigwigs
44 See 50-Across
45 High degree
47 Falsification
48 Cockout post
52 BBQ rod
53 Mosaic piece
54 On the go
56 Withdraw
57 — Aviv
58 Deli meat
59 Footstaple
60 Model S car
61 Otherwise
63 Long skirt
66 Balm plant
67 Meshes
68 A fifth of fifty
69 D.C. donor
70 Abbr. on a road map
71 Dallasites or Houstonians
75 — word (single-occasion coinage)
76 Plate holders
77 Skirt edge
78 Diva Sumac
79 Broken bits of ceramic material
80 Tax doc. pro
81 House animal
82 Novelist
83 Festivity
84 Pigeon perch
87 Males
90 Rapa — (Easter Island)
91 Solar beam
92 Frazier foe
93 Sheet fabric
94 Website visit unit
95 Pilot Amelia
97 Actress
99 McDaniel of "Gone With the Wind"
98 Comes up
99 Nero's 2,100
102 Bigwig
103 Florida city
104 "Uncle" crier, perhaps
105 Explorer — de León
106 Stratagems
107 Disney film of 2016
111 Nevada city
113 Highest point
114 — Pei
115 Mama birds
117 Golf average
118 Ending for opal
119 Extra NBA periods
120 — Plains

Amber Waves by Dave T. Phipps

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The Spats by Jeff Pickering

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BURP

...AND NOW I FEEL LIKE A SYNONYM ROLL.

Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps

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Weekly SUDOKU

3			1	7	2	6	
5	6	4	2			1	
1				6	4	5	
	2	7		8	6	3	4
	3	5				7	1
8					5		
7	8	2	6	5	1		
							5
			3	4	7		8

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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Trivia test by King Features

- LITERATURE: Which Victor Hugo novel was made into an animated Disney movie?
- MUSIC: In the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas," what was the gift on the eighth day?
- GEOGRAPHY: Where is the Kalahari Desert located?
- HISTORY: Who was the first African-American justice on the U.S. Supreme Court?
- BIOLOGY: What is the process called in which a nonreproductive cell divides in two?
- MOVIES: In the movie "Elf," what is the name of Santa's sleigh?
- ANIMAL KINGDOM: What is the largest mammal on Earth?
- U.S. STATES: Where did the first organized celebration of Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) take place in the U.S.?
- ASTRONOMY: Which planet is the smallest in our solar system?
- TELEVISION: Which 1980s-1990s TV family sitcom had a holiday episode titled "A Very Tanner Christmas"?

Answers
1. "The Hunchback of Notre Dame."
2. Eight maids a-milking.
3. Southern Africa.
4. Thurgood Marshall.
5. Mitosis.
6. The Kringle 3000.
7. The blue whale.
8. Mobile, Alabama.
9. Mercury.
10. "Full House."
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CryptoQuote

AXYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW
One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each week the code letters are different.

OKECX HED XPVRFNHENI
SJD AKXS LKODEYFN YKEBD
HMHPNHZND SK JFAHVPSI.
— IDJFCH ZDER

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TOP 10 MOVIES

- Moana 2 (PG)
- Wicked (PG)
- Gladiator II (R)
- Red One (PG-13)
- The Best Christmas Pageant Ever (PG)
- Bonhoeffer: Pastor. Spy. Assassin. (PG-13)
- Venom: The Last Dance (PG-13)
- Heretic (R)
- The Wild Robot (PG)
- A Real Pain (R)

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OBITUARIES

solidated and graduated from ROVA High School in 1953. She graduated from Galesburg Cottage Hospital School of Nursing in 1957 and also attended the University of Las Vegas, Nevada and Bradley University.

She married Arnold R. Rossell on Dec. 1, 1957, in Galesburg and he preceded her in death on Sept. 27, 2000. She later married Gary Dean Gibbs on Nov. 28, 2008, in LaFayette.

Survivors include her husband of Victoria; her three sons, Michael William Rossell (Lynn Moffitt), Douglas Ray Rossell and Stephan Gerald Rossell (Robin Kitterman); seven grandchildren; Brett (Lexi), Jacob, Paige, Megan (Pat) Lodding, Molly (Cole) Gardner, Stephan Lee and William Cody; several great-grandchildren; nieces and nephews; and many dear friends across the country.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her brothers, Billy and Jerry; her sisters-in-law, Ruth Rossell Moxley and Rosalie Carlson Flickinger; and many friends and other family members.

Carole worked for many years as a registered nurse at different hospitals and clinics including Galesburg Cottage Hospital, Galesburg Clinic and facilities in Oklahoma City, Las Vegas and Nashville. She held state and national offices for surgery and anesthesia organizations throughout her career.

She was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, having served as vice regent and regent. She enjoyed knitting, basket weaving, wordscape and crossword puzzles and reading. She cherished her family and friends.

Graveside services were to be held at 11 a.m., Tuesday, Dec. 10, at Westfall Cemetery in rural Victoria with Rev. Glenn Corbly officiating. Rux Funeral Home in Galva is assisting the family with arrangements.

Herman R. Menken

LaFAYETTE – Herman R. Menken, 83, of LaFayette, died at 8:50 a.m., Thursday, Dec. 5, 2024, at the OSF Richard L. Owens Home in Peoria.

He was born July 19, 1941, in Peoria, the son of Alt and Kathryn (Wagner) Menken. He married Barbara A. Schwabe on Sept. 23, 1961, in Wyoming, Ill. Survivors include his wife of LaFayette; his son, Paul (Terri) Menken of Hana-han, S.C.; his three daughters, Laura (Fred) Spiegel and Christina McCullough, both of Kewanee, and Betsy (Mike) Wilson of Lisbon, Iowa; a brother, Henry Menken of Clark, Mo.; five grandchildren; and three great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his son-in-law, James McCullough.

Herman graduated from Dunlap High School in 1959. He farmed in the area and worked at J. Brody Meats for 24 years, retiring at the age of 61. He continued farming until four years ago. He was of the Lutheran faith and was a member of the Stark County Farm Bureau and en-

joyed dancing square dances and raising Holstein cows.

Funeral services were to be at 10 a.m., Wednesday, Dec. 11, at Rux Funeral Home in Galva with Rev. Katie Gallagher officiating. A visitation was Dec. 10 at the funeral home. Burial will be in Galva Cemetery. Memorials may be directed to Abilities Plus or to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Patricia A. Pritchard

EAST PEORIA – Patricia A. "Pat" Pritchard, 71, of East Peoria, formerly of Speer, passed away unexpectedly at 8:49 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024, at Carle Health Methodist Hospital in Peoria. Pat was born on Jan. 9, 1953, in Kewanee to the late George "Jack" and Marjorie (Malone) Pritchard.

Surviving is her sister, Donna Pritchard of Peoria, and several cousins and close friends who will miss her dearly.

Growing up in Speer, Pat attended Valley Grade School and graduated from Wyoming High School in 1971. She went on to graduate from Illinois State University in 1975, and later received a master of library science degree from Dominican University.

She worked in central Illinois public libraries for 40 years. She spent many years in the Fondulac District Library where she was "Miss Pat," the children's librarian. She retired from the McClure Branch of the Peoria Public Library as a branch head in 2015. In her retirement, Pat became active in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Bradley University. She facilitated many study groups on movies and literature.

Her visitation will be from 4-6 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024, at Haskell Funeral & Cremation Services in Wyoming. A burial will be in Toulon Cemetery at a later date.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Bradley University, 1501 W. Bradley, Peoria, IL 61625. Checks must be made payable to Bradley University with OLLI in the memo field.

Condolences may be left for Pat's family on her tribute wall at www.haskellfuneral.com.

Shirley A. Stabler

WYOMING – Shirley Ann Stabler, 72, of Wyoming, Ill., passed away on Dec. 9, 2024, at OSF Richard L. Owens Hospice Home in Peoria, Ill. Shirley was born Dec. 4, 1952, in Elgin, Ill., to Robert and Dorothy Firnbach.

She married John Stabler on Nov. 30, 1974, and they had just celebrated 50 years of marriage. He survives along with her children, Sarah (Daniel) Cordis of Princeville and Cody (Ashlee) Stabler of Brimfield.

Her greatest joy came from family, and she took immense pride in being "Grandma Shir!" to her grandchildren, Claire, Oliver, Wyatt and June. She is further survived by

one sister, Joan Burger of Arlington Heights, Ill.; two brothers, Steve Firnbach of Roscoe, Ill., and Dave Firnbach of Salem, Wis.; as well as many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents and a brother, Don Firnbach.

Shirley graduated from Western Illinois University and later received her master's degree from Olivet Nazarene University. Her professional teaching journey was at Wyoming Grade School, where she taught for 35 years, touched many lives and made lifelong friendships.

Shirley was raised in the Catholic faith and she spent a lifetime immersed in its teachings and beliefs. Shirley was proud of growing up attending St. James Catholic Church in Arlington Heights and parochial primary, middle and high schools. She was an active member and regular attendee of St. Dominic Catholic Church in Wyoming for 50 years. The foundation of Shirley's life was her faith.

Also known for her green thumb, Shirley had a passion for gardening and landscaping. Shirley derived great joy from the countless hours she spent every year tending to her flower beds and garden.

Shirley's friendships were important to her. She drew strength and inspiration from her regular breakfast get-togethers with retired teachers and neighbors. John and Shirley spent their retirement years traveling as often as they could to visit friends near and far.

Shirley's family sincerely appreciates the compassionate care she received at OSF Richard L. Owens Hospice Home.

Funeral Mass will take place on Friday, Dec. 20, 2024, at St. Dominic Catholic Church in Wyoming at 10 a.m. The Rev. John the Baptist Uwigaba and The Rev. Corey Krenziel will co-officiate. Burial will follow in the St. Dominic Cemetery in Wyoming. Visitation will take place on Thursday, Dec. 19, 2024, at Haskell Funeral and Cremation Services in Wyoming from 5-7 p.m. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

To leave condolences for Shirley's family, please visit www.haskellfuneral.com.

Harold Hodges

EDELSTEIN – Harold "Ralph" Hodges, 72, of Edelstein, passed away on Dec. 5, 2024, with his family by his side.

Ralph was born in Bakersfield, Calif., the son of Harold and Gloria (Hukill) Hodges. He married Pamela Neahrng in 1979, and lived in Edelstein for many years.

He began and operated a land-surveying business for over 30 years, retiring in 2018.

Ralph's survivors include his wife, Pamela; his son, Michael (Laura) Hodges of Peoria; and his sisters, Jane Cagle of California and Kathy Apperson of Texas.



Pritchard



Menken



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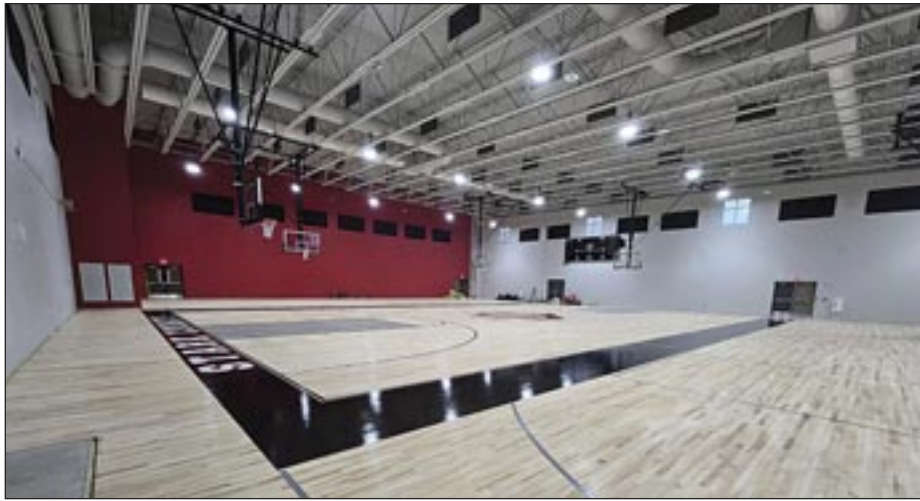
To help settle the Estate an auction will be held at 2396 IL. Hwy. #82 Altona, IL. or 8 miles South of Cambridge, IL. on IL. Hwy Rt. #82 or 6 1/2 miles East of Woodhull, IL. on Rt. #17 then 1 1/2 north on IL. Hwy Rt. #82 on,
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J.D. 60 include: 1953 ser. #6013148; 1955 ser. #6046720; 1955 ser. #6048185;
J.D. 70 include: 1955 ser. #7011090; 1956 ser. #7036927; J.D. 70 diesel pony start does not run; 1958 J.D. 620 ser. #6210750; 1959 J.D. 730 ser. #7312880; 1957 Case 801b ser. #8147353; A.C. WD tractor, 3 pt.: Case 1825 skid steer;
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The Prairie News Sports



Stark County's new gymnasium is nearly ready for basketball games. The boys team is scheduled to play its first game in the new facility on Jan. 10.

Rebels win finale in old gym

NICK VLAHOS

For The Prairie News

TOULON – The final scheduled varsity boys basketball game at Glenn Buchert Gymnasium probably won't be remembered as a masterpiece.

But one minute of inspiration from Ben Browning helped make it a thing of beauty for Stark County.

The junior guard scored five in a row late in the fourth quarter to erase a Brimfield lead and push the hosts to a 37-33 non-conference victory.

Brimfield had won four of its first five games and led 14-13 at halftime in its sixth as both teams struggled from the field. But Stark County made just enough baskets and defended well enough to win its second in a row after four losses to begin the season.

The Rebels' next home game, Jan. 10 against Knoxville, is to be their first in a new gym under construction near the current one, which opened in 1960. First-year Stark County Coach Kane Mastin probably won't soon forget the finale.

"If you would have told me that we would have scored 13 points in a half and been down one and had a really good chance to win, I would have thought that I was dreaming," he said.

"I thought the kids played really, really well and committed to the defensive side of the floor and when the moment called for it, we made the plays that we had to."

Perhaps no plays were bigger than the ones Browning made after Brimfield took a 31-29

lead with 2:14 remaining in the game. Browning's three-point play at 1:57 gave Stark County a lasting lead. Fifty-two seconds later, his layup made it 34-31.

"A lot was going through my head, but I knew our team could come through after that," Browning said.

In the final 18 seconds, Stark County had a defensive stop and sealed the outcome by going 3-for-4 on free throws. Browning finished with a team-high 12 points.

"This is my third year with him, and I feel like this is the first time where you knew that the moment was not going to get too bright and he was ready for it," said Mastin, who assisted Browning's father, Dusty Browning, before he resigned following the *Continued on Page 9*

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