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Acquisition of Tamarack Farms gives almost a thousand additional acres to Hackmatack NWR

The Conservation Fund, Illinois Audubon Society, and Openlands announced today the partnership's acquisition of Tamarack Farms in Richmond, Illinois for Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge (Hackmatack). Straddling the Illinois-Wisconsin border, the federally designated Refuge protects vital habitat for the region's biodiversity while offering extensive recreational opportunities for the 12 million residents of the greater Chicago, Rockford, and Milwaukee metropolitan areas.

At 985 acres, Tamarack Farms is the largest single property located within Hackmatack's approved boundary, where the average property size is only 63 acres. According to the Prairie State Conservation Coalition, which maintains a database of all conservation properties in Illinois, Tamarack Farms is the largest conservation acquisition in the Chicago region since the creation of Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in 1996. Additionally, Tamarack Farms will connect several existing conservation areas, creating a continuous 5,600-acre macrosite — the third largest in the six-county metro region behind Midewin and the Palos Preserves of Cook County.

"Since the Tamarack Farms property was under threat of development, protecting it has been a top con-

servation priority for decades. Through patient negotiations over the course of years, this once-in-a-generation opportunity has been realized," said Emy Brawley, Illinois State Director for The Conservation Fund. "Thanks to our collaborative partnership, and steadfast leadership from advocates, local government, and our congressional delegations, Tamarack Farms will enable the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to dramatically expand public land access for residents and visitors of the region."

Established in 2012 by then-Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge protects wildlife habitat within the Nippersink Creek watershed in McHenry County, Illinois and Walworth County, Wisconsin. As envisioned, Hackmatack aims to create an 11,200-acre natural landscape by connecting four conservation core areas with wildlife-friendly migration corridors through a combination of acquisitions and private land conservation agreements. A map of the Refuge's existing land holdings is available here from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), the managing agency of the refuge.

National Wildlife Refuges serve joint purposes of biodiversity conservation, public recreation, and education. Hackmatack is also an urban wildlife refuge, a



Aerial photo shows the Tamarack Farm land that will add almost 1000 acres to the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge.

special designation within the National Wildlife Refuge system, which enhances its recreational and educational mission. When open to the public, recreational opportunities will include hiking and walking, canoeing and

kayaking, birding and wildlife viewing, biking, and wintertime recreation, as well as volunteer stewardship events. The property will also provide unique public access opportunities via an adjacent rails-to-trails path that connects with

Wisconsin to the north and the Grand Illinois Trail network to the south.

"High-quality public land is a boon to McHenry County, as it would be for other parts of the region with natural assets like Tamarack Farms.

From the emergence of Hackmatack in 2005 as an idea, Openlands has championed, with partners, the value proposition of a National Wildlife Refuge right here in our own

See ACQUISITION, Page 2



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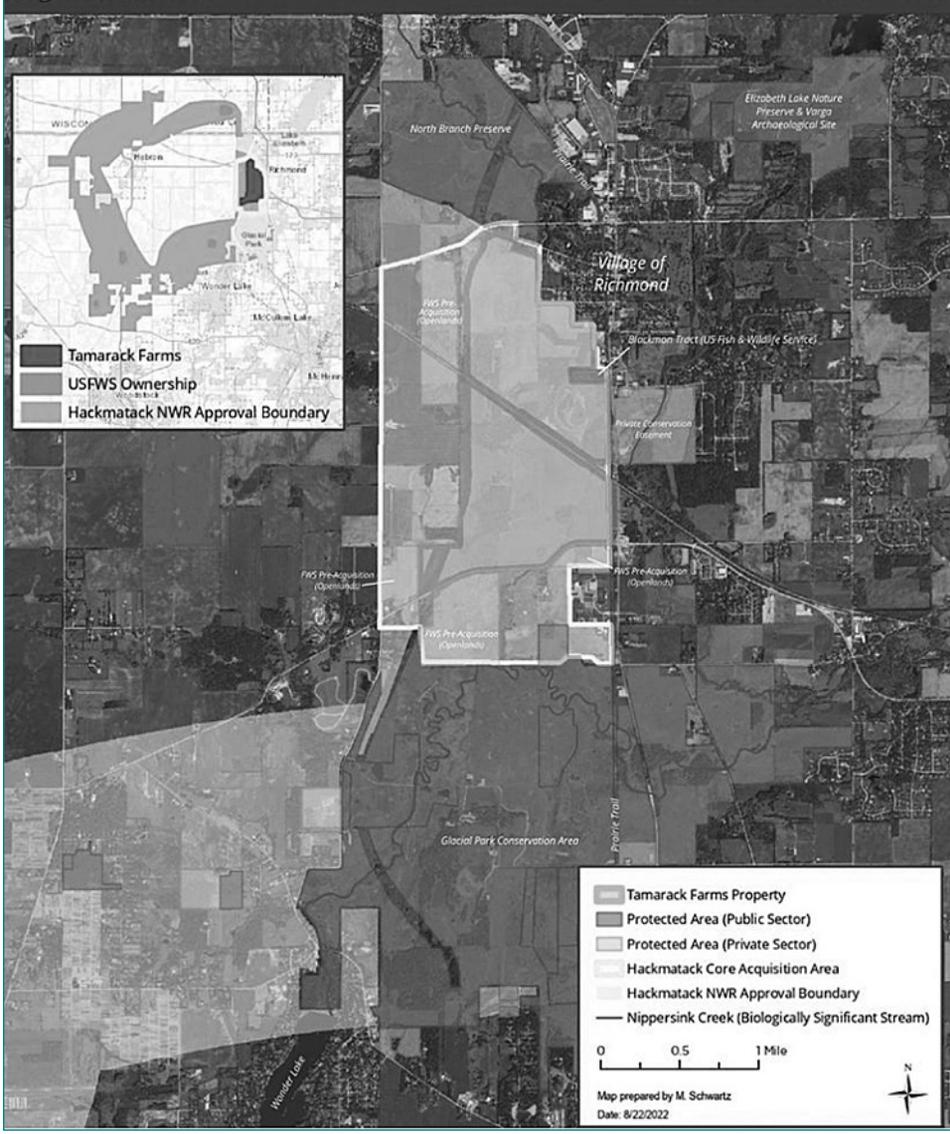
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**Tamarack Farms Property (985 Acres)
Regional Context**



Antioch Township purchases shuttered school as location for new township center

Antioch Township has finalized its acquisition of Faith Evangelical Lutheran School (1275 Main St, Antioch) to be revitalized and serve as the new Township center.

“This remarkable opportunity enables the Township to centralize all its necessary services in one facility,” said Tom Shaughnessy, Antioch Township Supervisor. “This consolidation will enhance the Township’s operational efficiency and accessibility to the public and provide residents with various activities. These forward-thinking initiatives exemplify Antioch Township’s commitment to mindful fiscal management.”

To help offset the cost of modernizing and repurposing the older or worn spaces in the former school, Antioch Township will seek grant funding combined with revenue from the buyout of its shared co-op office location. This collaborative effort between the Antioch Township Board and the Village of Antioch highlights their shared commitment to consolidation, efficiency, and economic responsibility.

The Township closed on the purchase of Faith Evangelical Lutheran School

on March 20, 2024, and hopes to begin renovations by May 15, 2024. Township officials will continue planning the new building design while exploring competitive construction and design proposals.

“Our early comprehensive plan survey results prove that Antioch residents want us in town. My administration’s goal has been to grow our services while finding a cost-effective, easily accessible, centralized location to benefit the entire community. I believe this location does just that,” said Shaughnessy.

“I would like to congratulate Antioch Township on the purchase of the Faith Lutheran property,” said Antioch Mayor Scott Gartner. “I am encouraged to witness the Township of Antioch’s progress in securing a new township building to optimize service delivery for the entire Antioch community. This achievement reflects positively on the township’s commitment to efficient operations, and I applaud their ongoing efforts to better meet resident needs.”

Antioch Township invites the public to follow its progress on social media and the Antioch Township website, www.antiochtownshipil.gov.

• Acquisition (Continued from front page)

metro,” said Michael Davidson, President and CEO of Openlands. “McHenry County is already seeing results of accessible open space. Between 2021-2022, visitors to the county spent over \$336 million, a 26% increase in spending from the previous year. Clearly, the economy benefits from our need to get outside and care for our physical and mental health. We hope this acquisition can lead to further investment in connecting our region’s natural lands.”

The acquisition of Tamarack Farms will further protect high-quality wildlife habitat on the property, including remnant oak woodland, habitat for nesting grassland birds and waterfowl, cold-water springs, a 70-acre open water wetland, and multiple feeder streams to the nearby Nippersink Creek, one of the highest aquatic quality streams in the region. Over 200 species of birds, 70 species of fish, 30 species of reptiles and amphibians, 35 species of mammals, and hundreds of plant species have been recorded within the refuge boundary.

“Large-scale conservation such as this project is critical to ensure species’ resiliency in the face of climate change, and Tamarack Farms will provide a natural sanctuary for both people and wildlife,” said Jo Fessett, Executive Director of Illinois Audubon Society. “This exceptional addition to the Refuge will not only create habitat for numerous threatened and endangered species of plants and wildlife, but also present the perfect opportunity to enhance public interaction and appreciation of nature.”

Tamarack Farms remains under an active farm lease and public access will be limited until the property is opened for recreation by USFWS.

The property was purchased from a willing private seller with the stated intention of adding it to Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge, resulting in the protection of nearly 10% of the land within the Refuge’s approved boundary.

The acquisition was financially supported by:

- The Conservation Fund
- Illinois Audubon Society
- Openlands, with additional support from:
 - The Bobolink Foundation
 - James and Elizabeth Bramsen
 - Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Hamill
 - Nancy Hamill Winter
 - The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation
 - Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
 - McHenry County Conservation Foundation.

The Conservation Fund and Openlands will hold the property in trust until it can be conveyed to the USFWS as funding from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund becomes available.

“In many ways, acquisition of Tamarack Farms represents a ‘dream realized’ for a small group who first came together over two decades ago to advocate for its protection as part of the National Wildlife Refuge system,” said Steve Byers, Chair of Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge. “Protection of Tamarack Farms, with its majestic oak woodlands, dynam-

ic wetlands, and opportunities for prairie restoration, is a historic leap forward for the Refuge and brings it closer to its goal of 11,200 acres of protected land. It also demonstrates the power of dreams and of a shared vision with committed partners in building a landscape that benefits our natural world and the residents of the region alike.”

Those interested in experiencing the Refuge are encouraged to visit the Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge website, hackmatacknwr.org, to learn about educational and volunteer opportunities, or to visit several of the USFWS or McHenry County Conservation District conservation areas within the Refuge boundary.

About The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund protects the land that sustains us all. We are in the business of conservation, creating innovative solutions that drive nature-based action in all 50 states for climate protection, vibrant communities and sustainable economies. We apply effective strategies, efficient financing approaches, and enduring government, community and private partnerships to protect millions of acres of America’s natural land, cultural sites, recreation areas and working forests and farms. To learn more, visit www.conservationfund.org.

About Illinois Audubon Society

The mission of the Illinois Audubon Society is to promote the perpetuation and appreciation of native flora and fauna and the habitats that support them. The Society is an independent, statewide, member supported, nonprofit organization. Founded in 1897, the Society is Illinois’ oldest private conservation organization with 2,200 members, 17 chapters and 19 affiliate groups. The Illinois Audubon Society has protected 6,200 acres by investing \$17 million to protect land and water throughout Illinois. Find out more at illinoisaudubon.org.

About Openlands

Founded in 1963, Openlands protects the natural and open spaces of northeastern Illinois and the surrounding region to ensure cleaner air and water, protect natural habitats and wildlife, and help balance and enrich our lives. As Chicago’s regional land trust, Openlands connects and energizes the region through strategic collaboration and local partnerships. We work closely with government agencies and policymakers to develop new environmental conservation plans and practices created with all individuals in mind. From establishing city parks and trails to stewarding large-scale landscapes and waters in Northeastern Illinois and the surrounding region, Openlands is committed to advancing nature-based solutions to mitigate the threats of biodiversity loss and climate change and create access to nature for all. For more information, please visit openlands.org.

Bill ending state’s tipped wage advances but prospects uncertain amid pushback

Opponents say eliminating the tip credit will lead to decreased hours and layoffs for staff

By Cole Longcor
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

An Illinois House committee advanced a measure that would end the state’s subminimum wage for tipped workers amid bipartisan opposition this week, but the bill’s sponsor said she’d seek further compromise before presenting it for a vote.

Current Illinois law allows employers to pay their tipped workers 60 percent of the state’s minimum wage. That amounts to \$8.40 hourly, compared to the minimum wage of \$14 per hour. If their wages plus tips do not equal minimum wage, the employer must make up the difference. However, advocates say, employers don’t always do that.

House Bill 5345, sponsored by Rep. Elizabeth “Lisa” Hernandez, D-Cicero, would mandate that tipped workers are paid at least minimum wage, not including tips. She said the bill will eliminate “subminimum wage, not tips.”

Hernandez made her comments during a lengthy hearing April 3 in a packed committee room filled with advocates on both sides of the issue. She ultimately promised to not bring the bill to a vote in the full House without first negotiating amendments on it, but she also noted one of those changes would better address inequity within the industry and add punitive measures against “bad actors.”

Proponents of the bill said that not all employers follow the law and dependency on tips perpetuates inequalities. A 2014 report from the Economic Policy Institute think tank found at that time 66 percent of tipped workers were women and the poverty rate of tipped workers was almost double that of nontipped workers.

“Depending on tips to make a basic living wage is a system that exposes workers to poverty, to inequity and to harassment,” Rep. Will Guzzardi, D-Chicago, said at the

committee hearing Wednesday.

While the bill is intended to increase wages for tipped workers and address inequities within the industry, much of the roughly two-hour debate in the committee hearing focused on how the proposal will impact businesses and employees.

At a Capitol news conference earlier on April 3, a coalition of tipped workers and representatives of the state’s restaurant and retail trade associations shared concerns about the proposal. They claimed the change would drive up prices at restaurants specifically.

Illinois Restaurant Association President Sam Toia said increasing the cost of labor will lead to owners reducing staff and increasing prices. Toia said many businesses are still recovering from the recession brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“A business that used to be a business of nickels and dimes is now a business of pennies and nickels,” he said. “The proposal would only increase that stress on operators.”

Dominique Juarez, a server at Alexander’s Steakhouse in Peoria, said at the news conference she opposes the elimination of tip credit and that the bill “corners us into a no-win situation.”

She said that eliminating tip credit could lead to higher menu prices, which would in turn impact her relationship with regular customers, which she described as “the heart of what dining is all about.”

Currently, seven states—Alaska, California, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington, along with Washington D.C.—have laws in place to guarantee tipped workers make minimum wage.

Chicago enacted similar legislation in October, which phases out the city’s tip credit over five years, culminat-

ing with tipped employees receiving minimum wage in 2028.

“Chicago’s passed this,” Rob Karr, president of the Illinois Retail Merchants Association, said Wednesday. “We should wait and see how it plays out over the next five years before rushing into a similar proposal statewide.”

While the measure passed on a 17-11 vote, one of the committee’s 19 Democrats, Rep. Jawaharial Williams of Chicago, voted against it. Rep. Marty Moylan, D-Des Plaines, was recorded as not voting. Democrats, who control the General Assembly, subbed out seven members on the Labor and Commerce Committee before the vote.

Other Democrats spoke out against the measure at the April 3 news conference.

That included Rep. Curtis Tarver, D-Chicago, who said the idea that tipped employees don’t make minimum wage is false, and warned the proposal would have adverse effects.

“This is more legislation chasing a solution to a problem that does not exist,” he said. “Eliminating tip credit is going to hurt the very people that this legislation purports to help.”

Tarver also said that while there may be some “bad actors” who aren’t paying their employees minimum wage, the current law should be enforced rather than eliminating the tip credit.

The One Fair Wage advocacy group, which has for years been pushing for an end to the tipped wage, celebrated the committee vote as a “historic step towards justice.”

“A direct legacy of slavery, the subminimum wage for decades has been used as a tool to force service industry workers, particularly women and people of color, to live in poverty,” Saru Jayaraman, president of One Fair Wage, said in a news release.

Court upholds law limiting where child sex offenders can live

Kane County man was ordered to move after first being told he could buy home

By Peter Hancock
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

The Illinois Supreme Court has ruled that a state law restricting where previously convicted child sex offenders can live is constitutional, although it left open the possibility that it was improperly applied to one individual.

In a 6-0 decision, the court found the residency restriction “does not infringe upon a child sex offender’s fundamental rights” and that there was a “rational basis” for the state to restrict where a person convicted of such a crime can live.

“The legislature has a legitimate interest in protecting children from neighboring child sex offenders and sexual predators,” the court said in an opinion written by Justice David Overstreet. “The Residency Restriction bears a reasonable relationship to furthering the State’s public interest in protecting children by creating a buffer between a child day care home and the home of a child sex offender to protect children from the harm for which child sex offenders have been convicted.”

The case involved Martin Kopf, a Kane County resident, now in his 50s, who was con-

victed in 2003 of aggravated criminal sexual abuse for an incident involving a 15-year-old boy. According to a published report of the incident, Kopf was a high school basketball coach at the time and sexually abused a member of his team during a sleepover at which he allegedly served the boy alcohol.

Kopf served three years’ probation and reportedly has not reoffended since that incident. But he is permanently required to register as a sex offender, which, among other things, entails legal restrictions on where he is allowed to live.

In 2018, Kopf and his wife bought a home in the village of Hampshire, in Kane County. But before doing so, they checked with both the Illinois State Police and the Hampshire Police Department to make sure it complied with his residency restrictions. Records indicate both agencies told him that it did.

Three months after moving in, however, they were told a day care facility was located within 500 feet of their home—a violation of the state’s residency restrictions—and, as a result, they would have to move.

Kopf, who represented himself

in court proceedings, challenged the law as unconstitutional, and in 2021, Kane County Circuit Judge Kevin Busch agreed. Busch wrote the law was both unconstitutional “on its face,” meaning it would violate constitutional rights under any circumstances, and “as applied” to Kopf.

But in an opinion released March 21, the Illinois high court disagreed, overturning Busch’s ruling that the law was facially unconstitutional, and saying there was no factual evidence in the record to support a finding that it was unconstitutional “as applied” in Kopf’s case.

The court therefore sent the case back to Kane County for the sole purpose of determining whether there was evidence to find the law unconstitutional “as applied” to Kopf.

Courts generally use one of two standards in deciding whether a law is constitutional. In cases involving a “fundamental right,” the standard of “strict scrutiny” applies, meaning the government has to show the law serves a compelling state interest and that it is narrowly tailored to achieve that interest.

But in cases involving rights that are less than fundamental, courts use a “rational basis test,”

meaning the government only has to show a rational connection between the law’s means and its goals.

Citing language first coined by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Cardozo in a famous 1937 opinion, the state’s high court said the right to live where one pleases is not “fundamental” because it “is not ‘deeply rooted in this Nation’s history and tradition’ or ‘implicit in the concept of ordered liberty’ such that ‘neither liberty nor justice would exist if [it] were sacrificed.’”

Therefore, the court said, the state only needed to show a rational basis for residency restrictions.

Kane County Judge Busch said the restrictions failed the rational basis test, citing studies that have shown there is little or no evidence to suggest such restrictions reduce the chance of someone reoffending.

But in its March 21 ruling, the Supreme Court reversed that decision, saying such studies don’t matter because the legislature’s judgment in drafting a statute “may be based on rational speculation unsupported by evidence or empirical data and are not subject to judicial fact-finding.”

PM&L Theatre holding auditions for ‘Camelot’

Imagine stepping onto a stage where the legendary tales of courage, honor, and romance come to life before your eyes. This is your moment to shine in the timeless world of Camelot, where magic meets reality and every performance tells a story of grandeur and heart. As PM&L Theatre prepares to bring this classic to our audience, you’re invited to be a part of this extraordinary journey. With auditions fast approaching, the opportunity to claim your place among the legends of the round table has never been closer.

Audition Details:

- Dates: Monday, April 15, and Tuesday, April 16, starting at 7:00 p.m.
- Location: PM&L Theatre, 877 Main Street, Antioch, IL
- Callbacks: April 18, starting at 7 p.m.
- Full details, sign up and audition tips are on Camelot’s audition page <https://pmltheatre.com/event/camelot-auditions/2024-04-15>

What You Need to Know:

- Come prepared to have your singing range tested as well as sing a portion of a song from the show. Suggestions for songs are on the auditions page.
- Be ready for cold readings from the script.
- All roles are open for casting, regardless of gender or age, with a focus on finding the right fit for this unique production.

PM&L Theater is located at 877 Main St., Antioch. For more information visit pmltheatre.com

Community briefs

Antioch Traveling Closet giveaway Sunday

The Antioch Traveling Closet will be holding a giveaway for local residents only on Sunday, April 14 from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. The new location for this event is 311 Depot Street (in Depot Plaza), Antioch.

Giveaway items will include clothing, shoes, cleaning supplies and toiletries. Hairstylists will also be giving haircuts. Through a partnership with AAHAA, an Advocate Care Coach will be in attendance to provide basic health screening services at no charge to participants. All services are provided on a first come, first serve basis at no charge.

Participants must have a valid driver’s license or state ID with an address showing that you reside in one of the following towns: Antioch, Fox Lake, Ingleside, Lake Villa, Lindenhurst, Round Lake or Round Lake Beach. Without identification showing you are from one of these towns you will not be let inside the event.

No strollers, car seats, wagons, or shopping carts are allowed inside for safety reasons. Please do not bring your won bags to the event, bags will be provided by ATC.

The ATC reserves the right to refuse service to anyone.

Antioch Traveling Closet is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. For more information email lisa@antiochtravelingcloset.org, or visit antiochtravelingcloset.org.

Penny’s Purpose fundraiser set for April 20

The Penny’s Purpose Fourth Annual Fundraiser and Silent Auction will be held at The Lodge of Antioch and Rivalry Alehouse on Saturday, April 20.

Dine in or pick up your meal at either venue (no third-party pickups) and mention The Penny’s Purpose

(TPP) or show their flyer to ensure 20% of all food and drink sales are generously donated back to TPP.

Secure your tickets for the 50/50 raffle now at <https://go.rallyup.com/b51303>. The booze wagon raffle tickets will be sold at the event. Winner need not be present for either raffle.

The Silent Auction kicks off at 6 p.m. upstairs at the Rivalry Alehouse, and features many items including: sports event tickets (Chicago Cubs, Chicago White Sox, Chicago Bears, Notre Dame, Kenosha Kingfish, and Milwaukee Milkmen), a car care package from Title Sponsor Raymond Chevrolet Kia which includes a loaner (Corvette or Camaro), pizza for a year by sponsor Antioch Pizza Shop, gift basket from sponsor Wings, Etc., fire pit, booze cart, wine baskets, customized chess table, customized chairs, and many more items!

Stay updated on auction items by visiting the event page at: <https://fb.me/e/1PfgXCyA>.

For more information on The Penny’s Purpose visit their website at thepennypurpose.org.

Children’s book reading at Volo Bog Saturday

The Friends of Volo Bog and Volo Bog State Natural Area are holding a children’s book reading and craft on Saturday, April 13 from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m.

From 1:30-2:00 p.m. author Tamima Itani will read from Monty and Rose. This is ideal for ages 2-7 accompanied by an adult. Older children and solo adults who love

birds will also enjoy this and are welcome.

A craft and book signing for all ages will follow from 2:00-3:00 p.m.

To register please email dnr.volobog@illinois.gov and give names, phone and ages of minors that will be attending.

Volo Bog State Natural Area is located at 28478 W. Brandenburg Road, Ingleside.

Tickets available for Long Grove Craft Beer Festival

Gather your crew for an afternoon showcasing a lineup of various styles of locally crafted beers presented by area breweries during the historic downtown Long Grove Craft Beer Festival on Saturday, April 27 from noon to 4 p.m.

Included with ticket purchase are: Beer Fest taster glass, unlimited craft beer samples, live music by Fox Crossing String Band and access to food vendors.

Ticket sales are open at www.eventbrite.com/e/long-grove-craft-beer-fest-tickets. Early bird tickets through April 12 are \$50. Must be 21 to purchase tickets and for entry into the event.

For more information, complete lineup of participating breweries and link to tickets visit www.longgrove.org/festival/craftbeerfest.

Richmond Burton Helmet Club holding meat raffle

The Richmond Burton Helmet Club will be holding a meat raffle on Saturday, April 27 at 2:00 p.m. at Saylor Mick’s Pizza and Pub.

Come support the Rich-

mond Burton Rockets football program.

Included will be: 10 rounds of meat raffles, a 50/50 raffle and 2 free drink tickets pulled every round.

Event sponsored by Saylor Mick’s and Angelo’s Fresh Market. Saylor Mick’s is located at 2020 Route 12, Spring Grove.

Native shrub and tree sale order deadline May 3

The Friends of Volo Bog are taking orders for their Native Shrub and Tree spring sale-fundraiser until Friday, May 3 at 3 p.m.

Planting native shrubs and trees in your yard will help support neighborhood pollinators and other wildlife.

Pick-up will be May 11 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Volo Bog SNA parking lot behind the visitor center. Plants will be tagged for your convenience to pick up.

Volo Bog State Natural Area is located at 28478 W. Brandenburg Road, Ingleside.

Order forms can be found online at www.FriendsofVoloBog.org.

SWALCO holding household chemical waste event May 18

The Solid Waste Agency of Lake County (SWALCO) is holding its first mobile event of the year on Saturday, May 18 from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Metra Train Station, 205 N. Archer Ave., Mundelein.

Participation in this event is by appointment only. Online appointment scheduling makes the services easily accessible and lets the customer chose appointment times from their computer or mobile device. Appointments also allow for the safe and efficient planning, coordinating and controlling of the incoming household chemical waste and visiting vehicles. Safety is crucial and participants are asked

to please stay in their vehicles.

Collections are for residential waste only, no business waste will be accepted. SWALCO household chemical waste events are free for Illinois residents only.

Items that can be brought to the collection include: CFL bulbs, unwanted prescription, over-the-counter medicines and supplements (people and pet), household cleaners, gasoline, garden chemicals, pesticides, oil-based paints (no latex) and varnishes, and other household chemicals. For a more detailed list visit SWALCO’s HCW website at www.swalco.org.

To schedule an appointment for the household chemical event dropoff visit <http://www.swalco.org/165/Household-Chemical-Waste-HCW>

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Dazzling spring spectacle to surge soon

Fourth annual Tulip Festival likely to launch in late April at Richardson Farm

Cynthia Wolf
CONTRIBUTOR

The riot of reds, yellows, purples, whites, apricots and more that is such a welcome harbinger of spring soon will swell across the tulip fields at Richardson Farm.

Planted in the fall across roughly 12 acres of the farm's westerly fields were 350,000 tulip bulbs in more than two dozen varieties, plus 50,000 daffodil bulbs. Yellow, peach, white, early-, mid- and late-blooming daffodils are new entrants in this, the fourth year of the Tulip Festival at the Spring Grove farm located at 909 English Prairie Road.

Added to previous years' plantings, minus the 300,000 bulbs that were tilled up this year from the initial 2020 tulip bulb plantings, the Richardsons once again expect about a million beautiful blooms. While the best guess right now is April 25, exactly when the fest will open is always weather-dependent. A certain number of above-40-degree days are needed to bring the flowers into bloom. Oh, but when they do ...

"It's spectacular," said George Richardson, who operates the farm along

with his wife, Wendy, brother, Robert, Robert's wife, Carol, George's son, Ryan, and Ryan's wife, Kristen. "It's that first 'wow' pop of colors of springtime. It just feels good."

Carol Richardson agreed. "The tulips' arrival is the hallmark of the glory of spring," she said. "Seeing all of that new color out in the fields makes you feel energized and joyful."

The Richardsons have welcomed thousands of visitors eager to shed winter drab and take in the color-drenched views during the last three spring events. Once again, the fest will feature live music and food trucks on weekends, plus the well-stocked gift shop, modern indoor restrooms and wine tasting bar will beckon during all open hours of the fest. Hours will be 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays, closed Mondays. The gift shop will remain open until 7 p.m.

Cost is \$16 per person, all ages, Tuesdays through Fridays, and \$19 on Saturdays and Sundays for those 13 and older. The cost for those ages 4 through 12 on Saturdays and Sundays is \$16. Ages 3 and younger are



TOM FUNK PHOTO HI-LITER/MCN

A father captures a memorable photo as his kids delight in the tulip fields at Richardson Farm during the 2023 Tulip Festival. This year's fest is expected to open in late April.

admitted free. All paying visitors receive one free tulip with admission, which also includes entry to the flower fields, access to the picnic area around Richardson Lake, an activity area with Giant Jenga and other outdoor

games, and more.

Professional, compensated photographers should view the Photography & Filming page at richardsonfarm.com before visiting.

All who are interested in visiting the 2024 Tulip

Festival at Richardson Farm are encouraged to sign up for the Richardson Farm newsletter. Just go to richardsonfarm.com, click on the Tulip Festival photo, then click "Join our Newsletter" under the "Contact" drop-

down menu. Newsletter recipients are among the first to learn when the fest's opening date has been determined. Also in the know are those who follow the Richardson "World's Largest" Corn Maze Facebook page.

Summer youth employment program applications due by April 20

Applications for the Summer Youth Employment Programs are being accepted until Saturday, April 20

This program funded by the Lake County Board, provides meaningful work experiences in various worksites for approximately 175 young people over the summer.

To qualify for employment, youth must be:

- Age 14 to 18 (by April 20) or age 14 to 22 with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Attending middle school or high school
- Receiving free or reduced-price lunch or meet low income guidelines

Work opportunities for participants will begin June 17. The program lasts approximately 6 weeks. The summer Youth Employment program is administered by the Lake County Workforce Development Department.

Applications can be found at <https://www.lakecountyil.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=3877>



SUBMITTED PHOTO HI-LITER/MCN

From left to right: Circuit Judge Jorge L. Ortiz, Circuit Judge Charles W. Smith, Illinois Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth M. Rochford, Associate Judge Stacey L. Seneczko, and Circuit Judge John L. Joanem.

Nineteenth judicial circuit hosts self represented litigant program

Members of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) Access to Justice Division's Court Navigator Network spent the day in Lake County to learn about Self Represented Litigant (SRL) programs and initiatives. Guests observed the SRL family law courtroom and SRL guardianship court call and engaged in discussions about access to justice. Attendees consisted of other circuit court and state employees from the northern half of Illinois who share a commitment to access to justice, including Illinois Justice Corps fellows, court navigators, circuit clerk staff, trial

court administrators, and law librarians.

This program was made possible through the collaborative efforts of the Lake County Circuit Court and the AOIC, including Chief Judge Daniel B. Shanes, Deputy Chief Judge Patricia S. Fix, Circuit Judge Jorge L. Ortiz, Circuit Judge John L. Joanem, Associate Judge Veronica M. O'Malley, employees of the 19th Judicial Circuit, and the AOIC Access to Justice Division, and was further supported by the Illinois Justice Corps and Prairie State Legal Services.

"Thank you to all partici-

pants in this wonderful SRL program. Your work is vital to the fair and effective administration of justice. Collaborating with justice partners and outside agencies allows the Court to continue to problem-solve challenges SRLs experience and develop additional strategies to ensure the guarantee of access to justice," said Lake County Chief Judge Daniel B. Shanes.

The group was welcomed by Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Rochford and Judge Ortiz, who serves as Chair of the Access to Justice Commission. They expressed the importance

of access to justice and thanked the attendees for their commitment to SRL programs. The guests observed court proceedings, attended presentations from Self-Represented Litigant Coordinator Frances Pappagian, Justice Corps Fellow Sammy Leib, and Prairie State Legal Services Attorneys Megan Brady and Amy Weiss, gathered for lunch with Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Judges to hear about SRL initiatives in various courtrooms, toured the Waukegan courthouse, and were provided with a day of networking to share ideas and resources.



SUBMITTED PHOTO HI-LITER/MCN

Pet of the week

Rhett, is a Beagle mix, about 8 months old, neutered, up-to-date on shots, tested negative for heartworm and on preventative and microchipped.

While walk-ins are welcome, adoptions are by appointments only to ensure we have the staff available to help adopters. For information and/or to complete an online application, please visit www.saveapetil.org/adopt.

MCDH Operation Dropbox sign up deadline for drop site location is Friday

The McHenry County Department of Health (MCDH) announced the 5th annual Operation Dropbox, a donation drive dedicated to supporting local veterans. They invite organizations, churches, libraries, and businesses in McHenry County to become drop site locations for this important initiative.

Now in its fifth year, Operation Dropbox is a county-wide donation

drive that runs during the month of May. Donations are collected at drop site locations throughout McHenry County by Medical Reserve Corps volunteers and delivered to Veterans Path to Hope, a McHenry County non-profit dedicated to supplying the basic needs, shelter, and a number of transitional services to homeless veterans. Veterans Path to Hope also offers housing and employment

assistance, transitional living, basic needs including food/furniture/household goods, peer support activities, caregiver training, and counseling.

In 2023, Operation Dropbox yielded 5,466 pounds of donated goods from 28 donation boxes throughout McHenry County, supporting more than 3,000 McHenry County veterans and their families.

Operation Dropbox involves simulating a supply delivery for distribution, aiding the MCDH in practicing emergency response plans. It also offers a hands-on learning experience for MCDH staff and Medical Reserve Corps volunteers.

McHenry County organizations, churches, libraries, and businesses that would like to host a donation box at their location can sign

up here. All supplies, including donation boxes and posters, will be provided to all participating locations, as well as weekly pickups.

For more information, please contact the MCDH by emailing health-nursing@mchenrycountyil.gov or calling (815) 334-4500. The deadline to sign up as a drop site location is Friday, April 12.

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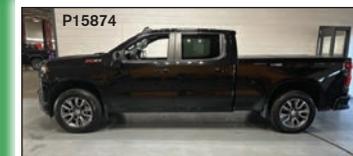
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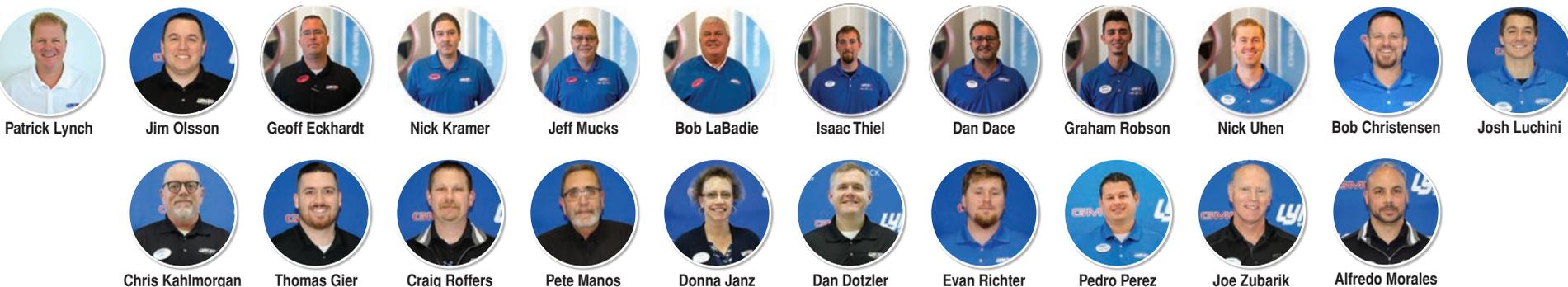
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Lawmakers question Pritzker's plan for new early childhood agency

By Peter Hancock
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

Gov. JB Pritzker's plan to consolidate the state's early childhood programs into one new cabinet-level agency ran into tough questions last week during a House budget committee hearing.

The plan, which Pritzker first announced in October and which he included in his budget address in February, would consolidate a host of programs and services currently run by three different agencies under one roof.

That would include such things as child care subsidies for low-income families currently housed in the Department of Human Services; preschool block grants administered by the State Board of Education; and the licensing of day care centers, which is currently done by the Department of Children and Family Services.

Pritzker is seeking \$13.1 million in the budget for the upcoming fiscal year to establish a new Department of Early Childhood. But that would only cover some initial start-up costs, such as hiring executive staff, buying new computers and software licenses.

It would also include the cost of surveying parents, teachers, service providers and other stakeholders about what they want from a new agency and how they would like to see it operate.

Ann Whalen, the person Pritzker named in October to oversee the transition, told committee members last week that the administration expects it will be two full years before the new agency will be ready to take over any of the programs being transferred to it.

"We really do see this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make the system easier, fairer and more cohesive," she said. "We believe that the budget request reflects the capacity we need to do this work."

Most Democrats on the committee seemed receptive to the idea of putting all early childhood programs under one roof.

"Conceptually, I support this," said Rep. Sue Scherer, D-Decatur. "I can see where early childhood is sort of spread all over the board."

But Scherer said she was concerned about whether the creation of a new agency would result in an overall net increase in administra-

tive costs for the state and, if so, where that additional money would come from.

"At the end of the day, it all comes out of tax revenue from taxpayers," she said. "So every dollar we spend on this—and I just need everyone to be aware of this—is a dollar we don't have to spend, potentially, on students, and teacher salaries, because it's money that we're spending for administration and location of a new agency, basically."

Whalen said much of the money the new agency would spend will be federal dollars that currently flow to other agencies. On multiple occasions, though, she declined to speculate about what the net cost would be to the state and whether the overall administrative costs—including new office spaces—would be more or less than what the state is spending now.

"I don't want to put out a number that gets in front of the process," she said. "I don't want to say we're going to have this exact org chart, or this exact look at programs and services, because I don't want to jump to conclusions about what parents and providers say they

want out of the system."

Republicans on the panel were more skeptical about the proposal.

"Why shouldn't we be extremely concerned that we are statutorily creating an entire government agency when you're telling us right now that we really don't have any idea what it's going to cost?" asked Rep. Blaine Wilhour, of Beecher City, the Republican spokesperson on the panel. "Wouldn't it be more prudent to go through this two-year study phase and not create an entire government agency that

we have no idea what it's going to cost?"

But Whalen said the idea of forming a single agency for early childhood services grew out of years of study and planning in Illinois, as well as the experience of other states.

"We firmly believe that it's important to begin the process of standing up this new agency, because when we have spoken to other states, they have said, 'we tried to do it all at once,' or 'we did not take enough time to listen,' or 'we did not stand up a new agency and

have the opportunity to plan before we transition the programs over, and boy do we wish we had done that differently,'" she said.

The committee took no action on the budget request. That will be part of a final spending package that lawmakers will negotiate at the end of the spring session, which is scheduled to last through the month of May.

The legislation to create a new agency is contained in two bills: Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 5451, both of which are still pending in their respective chambers.

Cost of teaching degree followed by low pay, benefits, seen as obstacles

By Peter Hancock
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

Illinois continues to suffer from a shortage of teachers and other education professionals, although recent efforts by the state to ease the strain have made an impact.

That's according to the latest annual survey of school officials from the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools, which has been conducting the survey every year since 2017.

"This matters," IARSS executive director Gary Tipsord said in an interview. "This is an issue that people care about. They think it is important, and they think it's critical enough that it needs to be addressed."

This year's survey found more than 90 percent of schools responding reported having a "serious" or "very serious" teacher shortage problem.

That percentage has changed very little in the last several years, although the question has been asked in slightly different ways in earlier surveys. In 2021, for example, 88 percent of those responding said they had a "problem" with teacher shortages, a percentage that was unchanged from 2019.

Tipsord said the answers school officials give to that question reflect their broad perception of what's happening in the labor market—their sense of whether colleges and universities are producing enough prospective teachers; their ability to hire qualified candidates to fill vacant positions; and whether the pool of candidates they pick from is larger or smaller than it was

in the past.

But Tipsord said more fundamental changes need to be made to address the long-term issues facing the teaching profession.

"There are certain things that have been done to soften that immediacy of the burden today," he said. "But I think if you talk to people in the field ... there's still a broad concern that unless we put some concrete things in place, this issue is going to remain pervasive for a longer period of time."

Respondents to the survey reported filling a total of 3,694 teacher positions this year using "alternative measures," such as hiring substitutes or retired educators, combining classes, and increasing class sizes, among other short-term remedies, according to the report.

Overall, however, the report found that the supply of teachers is not keeping pace with the demand, and that there are not enough new teachers coming into the profession to replace those who are leaving.

The survey also found that teacher shortages are not distributed evenly throughout the state. They are most severe in urban districts and in more rural parts of the state, along with vocational centers around Illinois. The specialties with the most severe shortages were special education and career and technical education. Shortages were also reported in key categories of support personnel, including school psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and nurses.

When asked to identify

causes of teacher shortages, 54 percent of the school leaders responding cited burnout from working conditions as a cause of their teacher shortage. Another 49 percent cited the availability of better pay in other professions.

Tipsord said those findings point to a fundamental challenge facing the teaching profession—the cost and benefit of pursuing the career. He said when students in high school and college weigh the cost of earning a college degree against the salary they will earn after graduation and the retirement benefits they can accrue, the idea of pursuing a teaching degree becomes less attractive, especially when compared to other career options.

"I think across all areas of industry—education just being one—but in every area of industry today, because of the ability to live and work in two different places at the same time, your workforce views career differently," he said. "They have the opportunity to look at career differently."

The report concludes with several recommendations for long-term ways to address the teacher shortage. They include continuing to increase funding for public schools, creating new ways for school support staff to become classroom teachers, and focusing administrative support and financial resources on acute shortage areas.

"As we have said year after year, our shortages are the result of generations of factors that we cannot resolve immediately," Tipsord said in a statement.

Lake County Sheriff's arrest bulletin

The Lake County Sheriff's Dept. reported the following arrests in Lake County. Suspects are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

March 2
Maria J. Gonzalez-Hernandez, 52, Waukegan, was cited for DUI – alcohol, and endangering the life of a child;

Salvador Alanis Moreno, 27, Waukegan, was cited for DUI – alcohol, no driver's license and no insurance;

Siumara Rodriguez, 30, Hainesville, was cited for DUI – alcohol, aggravated speeding (71 mph in 45 mph zone), open transportation of alcohol, and no driver's license;

Thomas E. Iversen, 40, Libertyville, was cited for DUI – drugs, and unlawful possession of a controlled substance;

March 3
Francisco M. Andino Paz, 35, Waukegan, was cited for DUI – alcohol, and no insurance;

Richard Eulopio Gerson, 37, Waukegan, was cited for DUI – alcohol.

March 4
Anthony French, 23, Zion, was cited for a warrant arrest: unlawful possession of a controlled substance;

Ervin Mesaljic, 28, Chicago, was cited for a warrant arrest: violating an order of protection;

Stephen McGuinn, 69, Lake Villa, was cited for bat-

tery, and criminal damage to property;

Ana D. Rodriguez, 22, Round Lake, was cited for DUI – alcohol;

March 5
Aaron M. Payuk Sr., 47, Twin Lakes, WI, was cited for a warrant obtained: theft;

Ubaldo L. Sanchez-Ochoa, 26, Waukegan, was cited for aggravated speeding (94 mph in 55 mph zone), improper transportation of cannabis, and driving while license suspended;

Kenneth L. Wheeler, 45, Dolton, was cited for DUI – alcohol, aggravated speeding (84 mph in 50 mph zone);

Aldo Velazquez, 30, Round Lake Beach, was cited for DUI – alcohol and no insurance.

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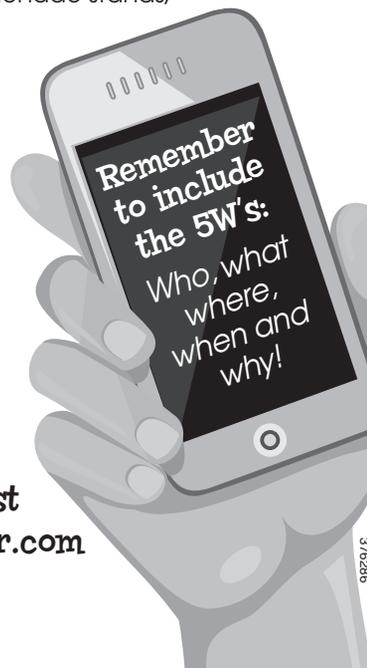
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Sheriff's reports

Deceased driver found in truck submerged in Des Plaines River

Sheriff's Traffic Crash Investigators are investigating a vehicle that was located in the Des Plaines River, which resulted in the death of the driver.

On April 4, at approximately 7:30 p.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies were dispatched to a residence in the 36500 block of North Route 41, unincorporated Gurnee, for a report of a pickup truck that was found submerged in the Des Plaines River. Sheriff's deputies arrived and located the vehicle partially submerged, with the driver deceased.

Preliminary investigation shows the homeowner, who lives at the residence, arrived home and located tire tracks in his yard. He followed the tire tracks, which led to the river, where he located a 2016 Toyota Tacoma. When sheriff's telecommunicators ran the license plate of the Toyota, they determined it fled from a local police department on April 3, 2024, around 9:45 p.m., approximately 1.5 miles away. Sheriff's telecommunicators also determined the vehicle was called in as a wrong way driver on April 3, 2024, at 3:40 a.m., in the area of Route 173 and Kilbourne Road.

Sheriff's crash investigators are working to determine the approximate time of the crash and what caused it. The driver of the Toyota has been preliminarily identified as a 79-year-old man of Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin.

The Lake County Coroner's Office responded to the scene, and an autopsy is being

scheduled.

The crash remains under investigation by the Lake County Sheriff's Office Technical Crash Investigations Team.

Sheriff's Office investigating two-car fatal crash

A 23-year-old Marengo man has died following a two-vehicle crash at the intersection of South Union Road and East Coral Road in unincorporated Union.

On Monday, April 1, at 4:57 p.m., members of the McHenry County Sheriff's Office, Union Fire Department, Marengo Fire and Rescue Department, Woodstock Fire Department, Huntley Fire Department, Hampshire Fire Department and Union Police Department responded to a crash involving two vehicles which resulted in the death to one passenger and injury to four others.

Preliminary investigation indicates that a 2000 Toyota Sienna was traveling westbound on East Coral Road. The Toyota failed to yield from a stop sign at the intersection with South Union Road and was struck by a 2008 Toyota 4Runner traveling northbound on South Union Road. This intersection is a two way stop and has no traffic controls for South Union Road.

The vehicles traveled to the northwest portion of the intersection and entered an open field. The 4Runner rolled onto its side as the vehicles came to final rest.

A 40-year-old Wood-

stock woman, driver of the 4Runner, and a 70-year-old Marengo man, driver of the Sienna, were transported to Advocate Sherman Hospital in Elgin with non-life-threatening injuries. A 23-year-old passenger in the Sienna was transported to Northwestern Medicine in Huntley with life-threatening injuries, and a 41-year-old Marengo man, also a passenger in the Sienna, was transported to Northwestern Medicine in Huntley with non-life-threatening injuries. A 23-year-old Marengo man was pronounced dead at the scene.

A guide wire to a utility pole was damaged in the crash, causing the pole to move and wires to sag low to the ground. ComEd responded to the scene and a short power outage resulted while repairing the damage.

Airbag deployments were evident, and alcohol is not believed to be a factor of the crash events.

The investigation is ongoing by the McHenry County Sheriff's Office Major Traffic Crash Investigation Unit and the McHenry County Coroners Office.

Teen accidentally shoots self in leg

Lake County Sheriff's Deputies determined a 17-year-old boy was initially untruthful about how he sustained a gunshot wound to the leg.

On April 6, at approximately 2:50 p.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies responded to an address on West Rose Avenue, unincorporated

Mundelein, for a report of a 17-year-old who was shot. Sheriff's deputies arrived and located the boy with a gunshot wound to his left leg. The boy said he was standing outside with two friends when a vehicle approached the three and someone inside the car shot at them.

Further investigation by sheriff's deputies determined the boy was in possession of a firearm and accidentally shot himself in the leg. Nobody shot at the three. The boy's two friends left the area after the shooting. Sheriff's deputies located two firearms that were discarded by the three near a dumpster.

The boy was transported to an area hospital for treatment. His injury was non-life-threatening.

The incident remains under investigation and criminal charges are possible.

Fatal house fire under investigation

McHenry County Sheriff's Police and McHenry Township Fire Protection District responded to a house fire in the 2800 block of N Magellan Drive in unincorporated McHenry at around 1:30 a.m. on March 27.

Deputies arrived to find a home engulfed in flames and were unable to make entry. Multiple fire agencies responded to the scene. During the course of the fire investigation, a deceased female was found in the home.

The investigation was turned over to the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshall.

Sheriff's office announces results of Scott's Law traffic detail

On March 19, the McHenry County Sheriff's Office Traffic Unit conducted a Scott's Law traffic detail. Efforts were focused on various roads throughout the county, ensuring motorists were following Scott's Law. Scott's Law, also known as 625 ILCS 5/11-907(c), mandates that upon approaching any stationary vehicle with flashing emergency lights, including commercial trucks and cars, all approaching vehicles shall reduce speed, change lanes if possible, and proceed with caution.

In total, the Traffic Unit made 55 traffic stops and issued 59 traffic citations and 7 traffic warnings with the following highlights: 26 Scott's Law violations, 9 speeding citations, 7 uninsured citations, 6 expired registration citations, 4 cell phone citations, 7 other citations and 7 warnings for various traffic violations

Scott's Law is aimed to protect emergency workers on the side of the road and traffic details are conducted throughout the year to help raise awareness for the safety of roadside first responders.

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Campers and RVs

1994 WINNEBAGO WARRIOR 22' V8 454 engine, 97,200 miles. Newer tires, new battery, new sub floor and flooring. Rooftop A/C works great. Rust free, runs good and ready for travel! Some updates have been done to the interior, but still needs some minor finishing. Asking \$11,500. Located near Rockford. Call 815-520-0997.

2022 COACHMAN FREEDOM EXPRESS 20SE. \$19,900. 262-470-4083.

Farm Machinery

JOHN DEERE 7000 4 row wide. W/no-till coulters, dry fertilizer & insecticide boxes. 608-728-1629

S&H 80 BU Spreader PTO driven. 608-728-1629

Sports/Classic Cars

1967 CADILLAC CONVERTIBLE, rebuilt engine, 1000 miles since rebuild, runs great. \$13,950. Call 262-949-6997.

1990 CORVETTE CONVERTIBLE, triple black, 49,000 miles, automatic, no winters. \$10,995. (630) 886-6667.

Trucks & Trailers

CARGO TRAILER 5x8 Enclosed, needs cosmetic work. Elkhorn location \$199. 262-949-6997.

FOR SALE

Announcements

CLASSIFIED IN-COLUMN ADS cannot be credited or refunded after the ad has been placed.

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Burial Needs

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

Furniture

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FIREARMS 1 piece or collection. Federally licensed dealer. Lake Geneva Antique Mall. 829 Williams St. Lake Geneva, WI 262-248-6345

GARAGE/ESTATE SALES

Estate Sales

858 DRAGONFLY LANE/FONTANA Sat. 4/13, 8-2 & Sun, 4/14 (1/2 price day) 8 till noon. Another FANTASTIC ESTATE SALE by Edie B! 3 floors full of Antiques, collectibles & treasures! For photos & more details, see estate-sales.org

HUGE ESTATE SALE IN 6-CAR GARAGE! 7766 Lakeview Drive Burlington, WI. THUR 4/11 12pm to 6pm. FRI 4/12, 9am to 3pm. SAT 4/13 9am to 3pm. Estatesales.net **ANTIQUES/VINTAGE:** Men's spats, collar display case, cast iron carousel horse, old license plates, car/oil/gas memorabilia, car books including Automobile Quarterly, toys, cap guns, clocks, bicycles, suitcases, cowboy hats, fedoras, derbies, top hat, helmet, fez, pink glass pieces, rose plates, claw foot walnut table, '50s Lane hope chest, glass showcases **ART/COLLECTIBLES:** Paintings, Michael Garman's "Wilmot Stage Stop" & sculpture, lg. signed Murano glass horse & base, lg. Hispano-Suiza Flying Stork showroom display size bronze, 1866 Remington rolling block ri-

file, doll house miniatures **SHOP:** Lg. rolling shop table, tool chest, tools, power drill, clamps, drill press, 15' tow chain, nuts, bolts, supplies. **FURNITURE:** Sofa, loveseat, cocktail table, end table, grandfather clock, red buffet, dining table, 6 chairs, white console table, complete queen bed, king headboard, 2 twin beds, white wicker table & 4 chairs, sm. marble top table, other tables, wrought iron outdoor table & chairs sets, umbrellas, cushions, deck box, sundial. **HOUSEHOLD:** Cookware, copper, dishes, serving pieces, giftware, kitchen gadgets, cookbooks, upright freezer, sm. refrigerator, space heater, lg. rugs, pillows, comforters, throw pillows, throws, vacuum, picture frames, storage bins and racks. **MORE:** Men's clothes M, L, XL & shoes 9.5, ladies' clothes M, fur jacket & long white leather coat, purses, costume jewelry, motorcycle helmet, bicycles, Christmas decorations. **AND MUCH, MUCH MORE. REASONABLE PRICES.**

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WOODSTOCK, IL • SUN., APRIL 21
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Admission \$10 • Booths \$50 • Rain/Shine
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Other Real Estate

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