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Rolling Thunder Illinois Chapter 2 is pictured with the POW/MIA Chair of Honor that they donated to the Lake County Sheriff's Office in a ceremony on April 12.

## U.S. Military POW/MIA advocacy group awards sheriff's office 'Chair of Honor'

The Lake County Sheriff's Office proudly accepted the POW/MIA Chair of Honor, donated by Rolling Thunder Illinois Chapter 2.

At a ceremony held on Friday, April 12, 2024, Rolling Thunder Illinois Chapter 2 unveiled the POW/MIA Chair of Honor and officially turned it over to the Lake County Sheriff's Office. The Lake County Sheriff's Office was selected for such an honor because of the office's commitment to those who have served, are serving, or will serve in the United States of America Armed Forces.

The POW/MIA Chair of Honor

is a commemorative symbol of the sacrifices made by American Military Families. The loss of life and the unfinished stories of those who never returned home is what the Chair represents. It is a reminder to all that these men and women must be found and returned to their families. The Chair has been developed through a coordinated effort by National Rolling Thunder and the Hussey Seating Company.

The POW/MIA Chair of Honor will be proudly and prominently displayed in the Lake County Sheriff's Office Training Room, where those attending

community meetings, community training sessions, and law enforcement training sessions will be able to see and honor the Chair.

The POW/MIA Chair of Honor is proudly displayed at several locations across the United States, including: United States Capitol, Illinois State Capitol, Gillette Stadium, Soldier Field, Lucas Oil Stadium, Guaranteed Rate Field and Chicago City Hall.

Retired Army Colonel Wayne Kirkpatrick of Rolling Thunder, Inc, stated, "As Americans, we have a

**See CHAIR, Page 5**

## Investigation results in seizure of dozens of machine gun conversion devices and firearms

The Lake County Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Group (SIG), a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HID-TA) funded task force, concluded an investigation that led to the arrest of a Grayslake man who was illegally manufacturing firearms and machine gun conversion devices, utilizing 3D printers.

Members of SIG conducted an investigation after receiving information that Charles A. Best, 31, of the 200 block of Highland Drive, Grayslake, was illegally manufacturing firearms and machine gun conversion devices. Following the investigation, on May 1, members of SIG and the Lake County Sheriff's Office Tactical Response Team conducted a search warrant at Best's residence.

SIG detectives seized 64 machine gun conversion devices, three firearms, and three silencers. Additionally, they seized two 3D printers that were utilized in manufacturing firearms and firearm parts. Several 3D printed pistol frames and high-powered rifle parts were seized, along with over 1,000 rounds ammunition and over 60 grams of cannabis wax.

Following the search warrant, the facts of the case were reviewed with the Lake County State's Attorney's Office and they approved the following charges: Five Counts of Unlawful Possession of a Machine Gun (Class X Felony),



Charles A. Best

and Unlawful Possession of a Firearm Silencer (Class 3 Felony). Additional charges are likely.

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "This investigation undoubtedly prevented bloodshed in our community. Gun traffickers are a real problem in Lake County and throughout the Chicago-Land region. I want to make it clear to anyone trafficking guns or drugs in Lake County: the sheriff's office and our partners will use all of our resources to find you, arrest you, and hold you accountable for your actions. Our Special Investigations Group is relentless in pursuing and arresting violent offenders operating in Lake County and we are grateful for our partnerships with the ATF - Chicago Field Division as well as all of our other federal and local partners."

The LCSO acknowledges the exceptional assistance of their federal and local partners, including: ATF Downers Grove 1, DEA Group 31, FBI NRA-1, HSI TOC-Group, Gurnee PD, Highland Park PD, Park City PD, Round Lake PD, Round Lake Beach PD, Round Lake Park PD, Wauconda PD, Waukegan PD, Winthrop Harbor PD, and Zion PD.

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# Liberty Bell Award winners honored

On April 16, Deputy Chief Judge Patricia S. Fix welcomed guests during the Lake County Bar Association luncheon meeting while Circuit Judges Reginald C. Mathews and Jorge L. Ortiz presented the Liberty Bell Awards at the event held at Waukegan City Hall. Each year, the 19th Judicial Circuit presents Liberty Bell Awards to an individual and an organization for their outstanding service and dedication in furthering the administration of justice. In Lake County, the Liberty Bell Awards are presented in memory of Judge Thomas R. Smoker, a Lake County judge who passed away in 2004.

“On behalf of the 19th Judicial Circuit, I would like to thank and congratulate Ms. Pamela Foster-King and Mano a Mano. They each have provided exemplary service, giving time and energy to strengthen the effectiveness of the American court system in the spirit of our Constitution. The Liberty Bell Awards honor those who help foster a better understanding of the rule of law, encourage a greater respect for the law and courts, stimulate a sense of civic responsibility, and contribute to good government

in the community. This year’s winners demonstrate these qualities, and we are pleased to honor them,” said Deputy Chief Judge Fix.

The 2024 Liberty Bell Individual Award recipient is Pamela Foster-King of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. In 1993, Ms. Foster-King began an impressive 31-year career with DCFS. For approximately one year, she worked in Cook County in the intake division; in 1994, she transferred to the Lake Villa branch, where she not only worked in the child protection division but also was assigned for ten years to a task force at the Lake County Children’s Advocacy Center. This team was comprised of law enforcement, special investigators, advocates, and prosecutors whose goal was to investigate reports of child abuse and neglect, which included victim-sensitive interviews of small children. Since 2006, Ms. Foster-King has served the Waukegan office of DCFS and the community as an area administrator for all of Lake County.

The 2024 Liberty Bell Organizational Award recipient is



SUBMITTED PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN

During the Lake County Bar Association meeting on April 16 at Waukegan City Hall, the 19th Judicial Circuit Court presented their Liberty Bell Awards. Pamela Foster-King of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and Mano a Mano Family Resource Center and its representatives were the two recipients of the awards.

the Mano a Mano Family Resource Center. Mano a Mano was established in 2000 to provide services and resources to assist the increasing number of immigrant families in Round Lake Park and surrounding communities. Mano a Mano was housed in a one-room

storefront, started a Volunteer Lawyers Program for those who could not afford a lawyer, providing healthcare, counseling, English classes, housing assistance, and many other services. The organization and its dedication to enhancing access to justice grew. Mano a Mano

has conducted citizenship classes and co-hosted Naturalization Ceremonies for many years. Its Engaged Citizens Program provides reliable and affordable immigration legal services. Mano a Mano and its accredited representatives are recognized by the US De-

partment of Justice Office of Legal Assistance Programs as an authorized provider of legal services. Mano a Mano has also assisted some of the most vulnerable members of our community, including victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

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# Democrats muscle through changes to ballot access, advisory questions

## Amendment was introduced and passed within hours

By Jerry Nowicki, Hannah Meisel and Peter Hancock  
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

Supermajority Democrats in the Illinois House moved quickly May 1 to push through a change to state election laws that partially limits ballot access and adds three nonbinding referendums to the 2024 general election ballot.

It's a move that caused minority party Republicans to vote "present," then walk off the House floor without even debating the measure, while four Democrats voted against the bill that would amend ballot laws for the election cycle that is already under way.

Republicans were particularly critical of a provision that prohibits political parties from appointing a candidate to a general election ballot if no member of that party filed nominating petitions for the primary.

The minority party also criticized Democrats' hasty movement of the proposed changes from introduction to floor passage. Rep. Jay Hoffman, D-Swansea, filed the amendment to an unrelated bill, Senate Bill 2412 May 1 before it was quickly moved to committee for passage,

then to the floor within hours. It now awaits action in the Senate.

House Minority Leader Tony McCombie, R-Savanna, noted at an impromptu news conference on a Capitol stairwell that the GOP has grown accustomed to legislation moving with little public notice—but it usually happens closer to the General Assembly's end of May adjournment.

"But we don't understand the sense of urgency right now, unless the goal—the end goal—is to stifle the democratic process through the changes on slating candidates," she said.

At the same time the amendment was moving through the House, senators were being briefed separately on the proposed changes.

In the Senate Executive Committee, which meets one floor below the House chamber, Republican Leader John Curran, of Downers Grove, argued that changing the rules in the middle of an election cycle would be unfair to potential candidates who are operating under existing rules.

He also said such a move could add to what he called

the public's growing mistrust of the election system generally.

"There's a lot of talk around the country about stealing elections," Curran said. "And the faith in the democratic process has been shaken a bit around the country. I believe Illinois would be adding to that, really, national problem, if it took that step here and changed the rules midstream rather than just waiting to the next election cycle."

But Senate President Don Harmon, D-Oak Park, noted there are other ways to get on the ballot after the primary has passed.

"A candidate who would want to run for General Assembly seat after the primary will have to run, as they can today, as an independent or a third-party candidate," Harmon said. "They would no longer be able to appeal to the local party bosses to have them installed as the candidate of a major political party."

Privately, GOP lawmakers said they believe the proposed change is designed to influence the outcome of one particular race this year: the 112<sup>th</sup> House District in the Metro East area, where in-

cumbent Rep. Katie Stuart, D-Edwardsville, is running for reelection.

No Republican filed to run in that race in time for the March 19 primary, but party officials say one is currently being lined up.

Republicans believe that district is winnable for them. Stuart won reelection to that seat in 2022 by a 54-46 margin over Republican Jennifer Korte.

Rep. Lindsey LaPointe, D-Chicago, was one of the four Democrats to vote "no" on the bill May 1, though others skipped the vote. She said she's not opposed to eliminating the slating process beginning in the 2026 election cycle but said doing it now is "moving the goal posts" in the "final minutes of a ballgame."

"That's problematic for me because as an elected official in Illinois, I'm constantly trying to rebuild trust in Illinois government and politics that many of the people I represent...don't have," she told Capitol News Illinois after the vote.

The measure would also pose three nonbinding advisory referendum questions to voters on the November bal-

lot, including asking whether health insurance plans that cover pregnancy benefits should be required to cover in vitro fertilization and other fertility treatments.

That mirrors legislation passed in the state Senate last month that would require IVF and other fertility coverage for insurance plans with pregnancy benefits that are sponsored by companies with 25 or more employees.

The other questions would ask voters whether they'd favor civil penalties for any candidate who "interferes or attempts to interfere with an election worker's official duties" and whether the state should adopt an additional 3 percent tax on income over \$1 million.

The extra revenue would be collected "for the purpose of dedicating funds raised to property tax relief"—a perennial concern in a state with the second-highest property taxes in the U.S., just behind New Jersey, according to a 2023 report from The Tax Foundation.

Illinoisans were already asked a similar nonbinding referendum a decade ago, when nearly 60 percent of voters said "yes" to a ques-

tion about a 3 percent tax on income over \$1 million for the purposes of education, which is largely funded by local property taxes. Then-House Speaker Michael Madigan's push for the so-called millionaire's tax was seen as a poke at then-gubernatorial candidate Bruce Rauner, a self-funded Republican who ultimately won the governor's race and spent his four-year term fighting with the powerful Democratic speaker.

McCombie said Republicans had offered bills aimed at property tax relief on several occasions in recent years. She and state Rep. Ryan Spain, R-Peoria, argued the referendums were a distraction.

"What you saw today was a phony attempt to solicit feedback from voters that was covering up the real intention to the Democrats' bill upstairs, which is to eliminate competition in our elections," Spain said.

As state law limits the number of questions on a statewide ballot to three, SB 2412 would also crowd out the possibility of any other citizen-initiated questions from making it to the ballot.

## Community briefs

### Pie and plant sale Saturday at St. Joseph

The Altar and Rosary Society - CCW of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Richmond is holding the 16<sup>th</sup> annual day before Mother's Day Pie & Plant Sale on Saturday. The sale begins at 8:30 a.m. and continues until all pies and plants are sold.

The homemade pies are baked by parishioners of St. Joseph's, and choices can range from rhubarb-apple to blueberry or pear. Hanging baskets and 14" mixed patio planters will also be for sale. First come, first serve on pies and plants so stop in early for the widest selection.

The church is located at 10519 Main St., Richmond, half a block south of the intersection of highways 12 and 173.

For more information call the church at 815-678-7421 or visit their Facebook page or website at stjosephrichmondil.weconnect.com.

### Residential recycling event Saturday

McHenry County Department of Health is holding its first residential recycling event of the year on Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon in Harvard at Milky Way Park.

This event is for residential waste only, no business waste will be accepted. The event is free but certain items come with fees. Sensitive documents can also be shredded on premises.

Accepted items include: computers, computer keyboards and mice, printers, fax machines, scanners and small-scale servers, DVD players, DVD recorders, VCRs, video game consoles, portable digital music players, converter boxes, cable and sat receivers, textiles and clothing, and clean Styrofoam. TV's, monitors, alkaline batteries, and fluorescent tubes and bulbs accepted with fees.

To learn more about this event and others in 2024 visit the website at <https://www.mchenrycountyil.gov/departments/health-department/environmental-health/solid-waste-program>.

Milky Way Park is located at 300 Lawrence Road, Harvard.

### Touch-A-Truck event set for May 19

The McHenry County Division of Transportation will be holding their inaugural Touch-a-Truck event, taking place Sunday, May 19, from

11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Blain's Farm & Fleet, located at 11501 US Route 14, Woodstock, IL.

Touch-A-Truck is a free, family-friendly event open to the public, offering attendees the opportunity to explore and learn about a variety of vehicles and equipment. Attendees will be able to get up close and personal with the machines and learn how they operate, making it an educational and fun experience for all ages.

In addition to the interactive exhibits, the event will feature a "Load the Loader" initiative, where attendees are encouraged to bring non-perishable food donations. These donations will be collected in a large loader and later sent to The Woodstock Food Pantry to help support local families in need.

Touch-A-Truck features a wide variety of vehicles and equipment not limited to the McHenry County Division of Transportation fleet with participating government agencies and private industry. McHenry County Sheriff's Office will be participating in the event which will include a demonstration from their K9 team at 12:30 p.m.



SUBMITTED PHOTO HI-LITER/MCN

Officials from Lake County that are shown here recently spent time in Springfield with officials from other counties across the state to discuss key policy issues.

## Lake County officials advocate for key policy issues in Springfield

Lake County officials recently met with officials from 40 counties across the state to discuss key policy issues as the Illinois State Association of Counties (ISACO) in partnership with the United Counties Council of Illinois hosted the first annual Illinois County Lobby Day in Springfield.

County Board Chair Sandy Hart, Legislative Committee Chair John Wasik and fellow Board Members Marah Altenberg, Paul Frank and Gina Roberts participated in a Legislative Briefing at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Attendees heard presentations from Illinois House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, Senate President Don Harmon, House Republican Leader Tony McCombie and Senate Republican Leader John Curran.

Following the briefing, attendees visited the Illinois Statehouse to advocate in support of issues beneficial to counties and their residents.

"We were happy to be part of this event

as part of our advocacy of our legislative priorities," County Board Chair Sandy Hart said. "During the visit, we spoke with our legislators about the importance of safe firearm storage, the increased protection of our wetlands and natural resources and our overall legislative program."

A reception was held for county officials and state legislators, which provided opportunities to network and build important relationships among county officials across the state.

"We were able to meet with most of our Lake County Springfield delegation to discuss some essential needs for our communities," said John Wasik, chair of the Legislative Committee and Lake County Board Member District 6. "We'd like to thank the senators and representatives who made time to talk to us during their session. Any chance we have to connect with them is an invaluable opportunity."



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~ including McHenry County News

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Dr. Cindy Skrukud is shown with her 2024 Conservation Champion award.

## Skrukud receives the 2024 Conservation Champion Award

The McHenry County Conservation District Board of Trustees recognized Dr. Cindy Skrukud as the 2024 Conservation Champion for her unwavering leadership in protecting the natural and cultural heritage in McHenry County.

The Conservation Champion award recognizes individuals who have made one or more contributions of extraordinary significance or impact to the conservation movement through their continued dedication and support of the mission of the MCCD.

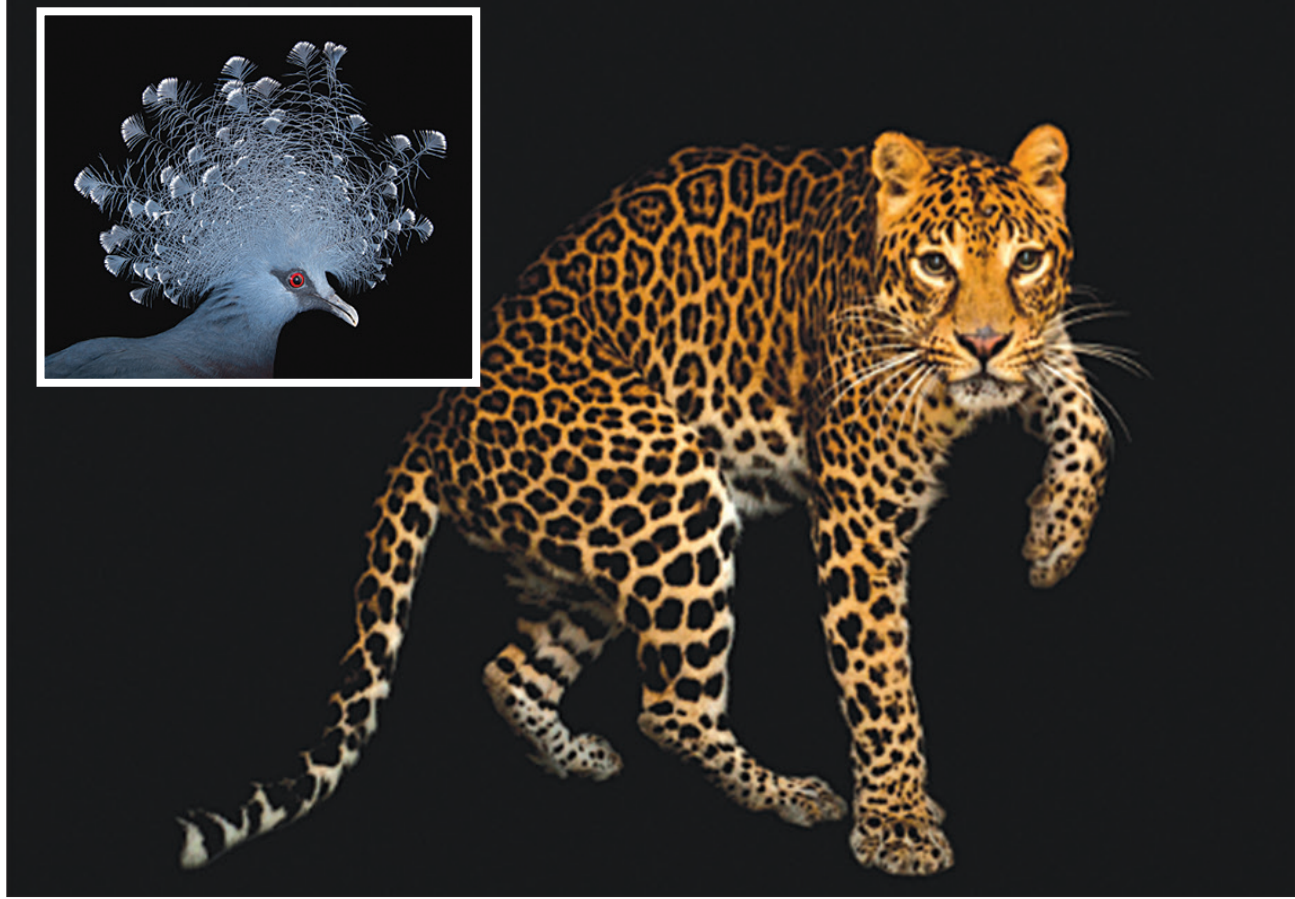
“Dr. Skrukud has been an inspiration and driving force toward ensuring McHenry County remains one of the most conservation-minded, environmentally focused counties in Illinois for the past 30 years. The people, plants and wildlife in McHenry County are forever grateful for her selfless service and stewardship,” stated McHenry County Conservation District Executive Director Elizabeth Kessler.

Dr. Skrukud’s efforts have become a cornerstone of environmental advocacy, conservation and restoration efforts for hundreds of people throughout the years. For more than two decades, she assisted the Conservation District

with various advocacy initiatives and educational outreach programs to protect the quality of our drinking water and ensure healthy lands and waters. Her service extended to watershed planning groups, and involvement and technical expertise on McHenry County’s Water Resources Action Plan (WRAP) on issues related to nutrient loss reduction and watershed management.

Dr. Skrukud helped form the Boone-Dutch Creek Watershed Alliance, the Kishwaukee River Ecosystem Partnership, and was a leader within the Fox River Ecosystem Partnership, Fox River Study Group and Nippersink Watershed Association. She also served as the former Executive Director of the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County and as a founding member of the Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge.

“The Conservation District extends its enthusiastic congratulations for her advocacy and devotion and for standing out and standing up for conservation and protecting our water, wildlife, and way of life in McHenry County,” states McHenry County Conservation District Board President Christopher Dahm.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOEL SARTORE/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTO ARK HI-Liter/MCN

National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore is the key note speaker for the Preservation Foundation gala on May 17 at Independence Grove Forest Preserve in Libertyville.

## National Geographic’s Joel Sartore headlines LCFP gala May 17

World-renowned National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore is the featured speaker at a May 17 gala benefiting the Lake County Forest Preserves.

Sartore will delve into his ambitious National Geographic Photo Ark project dedicated to documenting every species living in the world’s zoos, aquariums and wildlife sanctuaries.

His goal is to create a photo archive of global diversity to inspire action through education, motivating people to help protect these animals for future generations. The award-winning photographer anticipates the completed project will encompass portraits of 20,000 species, including birds, fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.

The evening features a cocktail reception, seated dinner and a photo-filled presentation. The Preservation Foundation, the charitable partner of the Lake County Forest Preserves, is holding the event at Independence Grove Forest Preserve in Libertyville.

The business casual gala kicks off a significant fundraising campaign in Lake County. The foundation is striving to secure \$20 million in endowment funds by

the end of 2025 to support the forest preserves. Collaboratively, donations from individuals, corporations and foundations provide a continuous source of funding to ensure restored land remains healthy and resilient/

The interest generated from the endowment will annually offer \$800,000 to support essential land management tasks. This funding will safeguard decades of investments, comprising both public and private funds, dedicated to the restoration of the forest preserves, said Preservation Foundation President Nels Leutwiler. “The endowment will also provide a steady source of matching funds necessary to secure outside grants and donations in order to advance future projects.”

Event organizers say Sartore is an ideal choice to inaugurate the fundraising campaign, given his alignment with the mission and conservation principles of the Forest Preserves. The National Geographic Photo Ark is a multiyear effort to raise awareness about endangered species and conservation efforts. Sartore’s striking portraits of animals have drawn attention to the plight of many species facing extinction due to habitat

loss, climate change and other human-induced factors.

Sartore was a newspaper photographer before focusing on wildlife photography. He often uses a simple black or white background in his portraits to focus the viewer’s attention solely on the animal subject. His minimalist approach highlights the beauty and diversity of each species he photographs.

“As stewards of the environment, we are thrilled to welcome Joel Sartore to kick off our fundraising campaign,” said Executive Director Alex Ty Kovach. “His dedication to the preservation of wildlife through his National Geographic project resonates deeply with our mission to protect and conserve the biodiversity of Lake County.”

### Facts about Joel Sartore

- First camera was a Nikon FM2. Paid extra to get the all-black body.
- In most cases, he only uses Photoshop for basic “traditional darkroom” functions such as cropping, color correcting or spotting out dust.
- Grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska and spent weekends in nature fishing with his father.
- His father made him aware

of nature’s beauty and how humans played a part in its gradual devastation.

- He is an Eagle Scout.
- Started snapping photos with an old camera borrowed from a friend’s father.
- Became an avid photographer in college and majored in photojournalism.
- Authored several books, including many about the National Geographic Photo Ark.
- Named 2018 National Geographic Explorer of the Year.
- Says he’s been almost killed more than he cares to tell his family. Multiple car and truck wrecks while on assignment and an overheated helicopter that landed on a highway are on the list.
- Met wife, Kathy, in college at a blues bar. They now live in Lincoln, Nebraska and have three children.
- He aired a segment on CBS Sunday Morning in 2006 about his wife’s experience with advanced breast cancer and successful treatment. “Cancer is a thief. It steals time,” he said.
- Before the cancer, he admitted he was a workaholic. “Cancer made me a better father.” Admits he lives life differently now.

To purchase tickets or a table, visit [LCFPD.org/gala](http://LCFPD.org/gala) or call 847-968-3110.

## Operation Dropbox donations accepted through May 31

For the fifth straight year, McHenry County’s businesses, civic groups and local governments are banding together to collect supplies for veterans through Operation Dropbox.

Through May 31, dropboxes will be set up at more than 80 sites across McHenry

County to accept needed items such as nonperishable food, paper products, personal hygiene items, household items, socks, pillows, and other necessities.

You can find a complete list of needed items, as well as drop-off locations near you by visiting [www.mchenrycountyil.gov/departments/health-department/operation-dropbox](http://www.mchenrycountyil.gov/departments/health-department/operation-dropbox).

rycountyil.gov/departments/health-department/operation-dropbox.

Donations will be collected weekly, and will be distributed to veterans through the local charity of Veterans Path to Hope.

Last year, McHenry County’s generous residents donated more than 2 1/2 tons of supplies for our veterans. With more than three times the dropboxes out this year, they hope to shatter that record.

This program is made possible by the McHenry County Department of Health, the Medical Reserve Corps, Veterans Assistance Commission, the Division of Transportation, and the Veterans Path to Hope.

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**Chair** (Continued from front page)

moral obligation to find, identify, and repatriate our nation's service men and women. The impact of a soldier missing in action spans many generations and transcends political issues, social issues and any contemporary controversy. We must never forget their sacrifice regardless of the era of loss. This Chair of Honor is to remind us to....Never Forget!"

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "This Chair will serve as a constant reminder of the sacrifices made by our brave service members and their families. It is a symbol of our commitment to always honor and remember those who are prisoners of war or missing in action, and as a Marine Corps Veteran, I am so proud our Office will serve as a permanent display of the POW/MIA Chair of Honor."



SUBMITTED PHOTO HI-Liter/MCN

The Chair of Honor will be proudly displayed at the Lake County Sheriff's Office in the training room as a symbol of the sacrifices made by American Military families.



*For Mother's Day, forget the flowers & chocolate. Mom wants a new ride!*

P15956A  
  
**2009 TOYOTA YARIS**  
**\$6,736**

P15887  
  
**2021 KIA FORTE LXS**  
**\$14,715**

P15957A  
  
**2018 JEEP RENEGADE LATITUDE**  
**\$15,183**

P15923  
  
**2021 NISSAN ALTIMA SV**  
**\$17,986**

P15950  
  
**2021 NISSAN ROGUE SPORT S**  
**\$18,186**

P15814  
  
**2022 CHEVY MALIBU LT**  
**\$18,387**

240178A  
  
**2016 CHEVY COLORADO Z71**  
**\$18,419**

P15939A  
  
**2020 TOYOTA COROLLA XSE**  
**\$19,325**

P15789A  
  
**2019 VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN SE**  
**\$19,412**

P15938A  
  
**2021 FORD ECOSPORT SE**  
**\$19,490**

P15991  
  
**2021 BUICK ENCORE GX PREFERRED**  
**\$19,714**

P15958  
  
**2021 CHEVY EQUINOX LT**  
**\$23,412**

P15882  
  
**2022 CHRYSLER PACIFICA TOURING L**  
**\$24,211**

240235A  
  
**2016 CHEVY SILVERADO LT**  
**\$24,862**

P15693A  
  
**2017 GMC SIERRA 1500 SLT**  
**\$24,867**

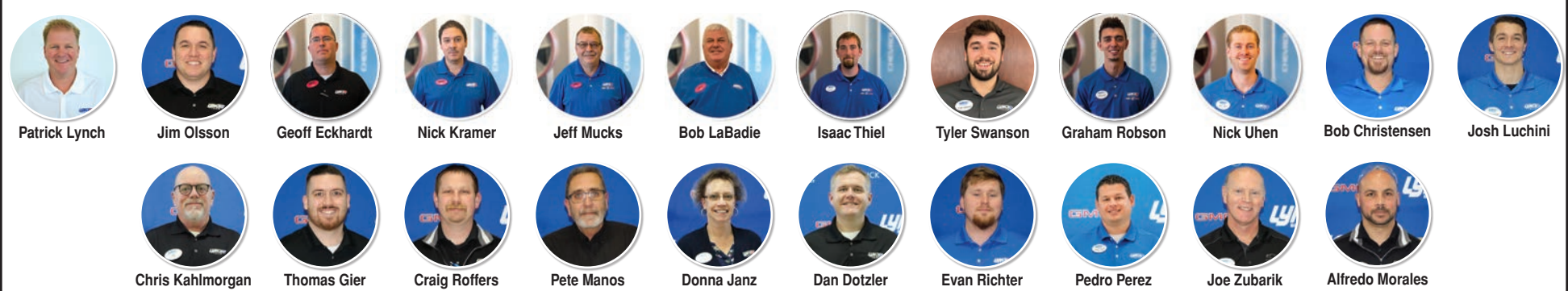
P15989  
  
**2021 CHEVY TRAILBLAZER RS**  
**\$24,921**

P15968  
  
**2022 TOYOTA RAV4 XLE**  
**\$25,819**

P15942  
  
**2021 CHEVY TRAILBLAZER RS**  
**\$25,872**

P15803  
  
**2021 CHEVY TRAVERSE LT**  
**\$26,691**

P15951  
  
**2022 RAM LARAMIE**  
**\$47,415**



\*Prices do not include tax, title, license and service fee. Dealership is not responsible for printing errors. Please see dealership for details. Sale ends 5/14/2024.



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# Illinois signs on to America the Beautiful Freshwater Challenge

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) commends the Biden Administration for launching the America the Beautiful Freshwater Challenge to conserve and restore America's vital freshwater systems for future generations.

The America the Beautiful Freshwater Challenge: A Partnership to Conserve and Restore America's Rivers, Lakes, Streams, and Wetlands sets a national goal to protect, restore, and reconnect 8 million acres of wetlands and 100,000 miles of our nation's river and streams.

IDNR Director Natalie Phelps Finnie was one of numerous state, Tribal, and local leaders from across the country who convened Tuesday at the White House for a Water Summit, during which the administration announced a new national goal and partnership to conserve and restore freshwater resources.

The America the Beautiful Freshwater Challenge is a new initiative that supports states and other governments and entities, including Tribes, interstate organizations, cities, and local communities who are advancing their own policies and strategies for conserving and restoring America's freshwater systems.

"Illinois' lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands are fundamental to the health, prosperity, and resilience of our communities and the wildlife that call Illinois home. They are the sources of clean drinking water, the backdrop for countless jobs, and the sites of outdoor recreation across the state," Finnie said. "Now is the time to work together to use all the tools and resources available at the national, state and local levels to protect waters that are at risk from pollution, destruction, and other threats."

Illinois is a water-rich state, physically and economically defined by Lake Michigan and large rivers that crisscross the state. Concerns about threats to Illinois' freshwater sources were raised during the state's 30 by 30 Task Force listening sessions in April 2022. The White House's Freshwater Challenge offers another way to connect Illinois' Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, the State Water Plan, the 30 by 30 Task Force recommendations, the IDNR Climate Action Plan, and other efforts, Finnie said.

On April 30, Finnie participated in a fireside chat on water conservation and protection at the White House, along with Vice Chair Frankie Myers, Yurok Tribe; Commissioner Katie Dykes, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection; and Secretary Reid Wilson, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

Illinois is a leader in many of the areas outlined in the Freshwater Challenge:

- Restoring stream connectivity and biodiversity through dam removal statewide.
- Addressing aquatic invasive species.
- Protecting groundwater through improved monitoring and regulations.
- Working in collaboration with other entities on Lake Michigan coastal resiliency through the IDNR Coastal Management Program.
- Implementing some of the nation's strongest floodplain management and public water standards for the protection of freshwater resources.
- Actively working to improve local community water system improvement plans to further the conservation and protection of freshwater resources.

# Lake County releases homelessness data results

The results are in from the most recent annual assessment of unhoused individuals in Lake County. This assessment, called the Lake County Point in Time Count (P.I.T.), is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night every January. The annual count occurs not just in Lake County, but in counties across the U.S. and is reported to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD).

This year's P.I.T. count accounted for 701 individuals and an increase in those who are unhoused (unsheltered and currently in shelters) by 50 percent compared to 2023. The volunteers who participate in the overnight count utilize a specific list of questions to help create an accurate snapshot of the unhoused.

Homelessness is a complex issue and multiple data systems must be utilized to obtain an accurate picture of the overall problem.

The System Performance Measures report includes annualized data on homelessness in Lake County for the year that ended September 30, 2023. It indicated an increase

in overall homelessness with 85 percent of the 1,087 people experiencing being unhoused for the first time. There was a 75 percent increase in families who were homeless over Fiscal Year 2022. Seventy-eight percent of the households assessed were homeless due to some form of abuse or trauma.

The average length of time for individuals in shelters decreased to 93 nights from 107 the previous reporting year.

"The Lake County Board is very concerned about the overall increase in homelessness, especially the number of families who are currently homeless in our county", said Sandy Hart, Lake County Board Chair. "We are allocating more funding to help increase physical and mental health services, create more job opportunities and expand housing options that people can afford. By working together, we can create the housing stability that will allow our families to succeed."

"There is no single cause for homelessness, it is a multifaceted issue," said Brenda O'Connell, Community Development Administrator. "We know that we will have less homelessness when rents

are affordable, childcare is accessible, gainful employment opportunities are increased and supportive services are available when needed."

There are countless stories where an individual or family in Lake County ended up being homeless for the first time due to no fault of their own, but with the network of services that are available, there was a path forward to help get them back on their feet.

One such story was shared by a mother, Karina, who along with her two children became homeless for the first time in 2022. They had moved to the area and were living with a cousin until she could get settled on her own. Unfortunately, after two months the cousin and their family decided to move out of state, leaving Karina and the two children with nowhere to go. It was when one of her children told a teacher at school about their situation that a representative from the school district stepped up to help.

The family was connected to PADS Lake County with assistance from the district representative, and they were placed into an emergency shelter. In less than six months

they were matched with Catholic Charities who was able to get them into permanent housing and moving forward to a better life for herself and her children.

Karina is incredibly grateful to the individuals and agencies who helped her to get where she is today and is hopeful for the future. She shared some encouraging words for those experiencing homelessness, "Never lose your faith and hope in God. Keep moving forward because nothing is forever. Appreciate the little things while you learn and grow from the experience."

She shared her story in hopes of providing a glimpse of the personal struggle that a family can face being homeless and how important having support services are to finding permanent housing and a stable future.

The Lake County Coalition for the Homeless works to end homelessness in Lake County and is looking for residents to join the fight. Those interested in learning how to get involved can visit the Lake county Coalition for the Homeless website at lake-countyhomeless.org.

## Applications open for Richmond mural project

The Village of Richmond announced that the application is now open for the Downtown Mural Project through May 30, 2024.

The Village of Richmond, Illinois, is seeking artists' proposals for two murals that will complement the historic downtown dining and entertainment district. This project is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts as part of their Grants for Art Projects initiative. The commissioning of two new murals

in the historic district is part of the Village's efforts to give residents and visitors opportunities to engage with the arts.

- Design submissions due by May 30
- Finalists selected by June 6
- Mural agreement available by June 20
- Project completed by September 30, 2024

There is no submission fee. Artists may submit more than one proposed concept. Designs must be the artist's own work and must not violate any

copyright restrictions. Any artist with previous mural design and installation experience is eligible to submit a proposal. You may select a site preference but it is not mandatory.

The Broadway mural (8'x24') will be attached to the exterior, west-facing façade of a privately owned building at 5613 Broadway Rd, Richmond. This proposed mural site is adjacent to Broadway, which has high visibility and a significant amount of pedestrian traffic.

The Main Street mural (8'x30') will be attached to free standing posts, south-facing, in the Village-owned Stevens Park, 10314 Main St, Richmond. This proposed mural site is adjacent to a pedestrian plaza which will have high visibility to northbound US RT-12 vehicle traffic and pedestrian traffic.

For more information on the project and the application visit the Village of Richmond website at <https://richmond-il.com/2024/05/02/murals/>

## Two Lake County schools receive Schoolyard Habitat grants

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Illinois Conservation Foundation (ICF) announced that seventeen Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grants totaling more than \$55,200 have been awarded for habitat development at schools and other public places.

"The Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant program provides children and educators with an opportunity to increase the use of native plants in Illinois landscapes while benefitting wildlife species," said IDNR Director Natalie Phelps Finnie. "By participating in these

projects, students learn that their efforts can make a positive difference in the world, and they gain experience in problem-based learning by planning, developing, and maintaining a native habitat."

The Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant program supports the develop-

ment or enhancement of wildlife habitat on school grounds or other public places. Funding is provided through donations to the ICF. The Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Foundation are the major sponsors for this program.

Nearly \$400,000 in Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant funding has been distributed since the program's inception.

"We want school children to learn about nature through hands-on experiences," Finnie said. "Our goal is to have Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant program projects developed in every county of the state and eventually at every school. So far, we have supported projects in 87 of Illinois' counties."

Lake County schools that were awarded a grant included: Prairie Crossing Charter School, Grayslake, sixth grade, prairie pollinator garden \$2,000, and Wooland Intermediate School, Gurnee, fourth and fifth grades, standard pollinator garden \$1,965.40.

Applications will be accepted soon for the next round of Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action grants, with an application deadline of Nov. 30, 2024. To access the application and related information visit <https://dnr.illinois.gov/education/grants/grantsshag.html> or email [dnr.teachkids@illinois.gov](mailto:dnr.teachkids@illinois.gov).



SUBMITTED PHOTO HI-LITER/MCON

## Pet of the week

Lavender, is about 3 years old, spayed, up-to-date on routine shots (incl. rabies), tested negative for heartworm and on preventative and micro-chipped.

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](http://www.saveapetil.org/adopt).

# You ought to be in pictures!

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

- ▼ Community events, car washes, festivals, lemonade stands, school projects – people at work and at play.
- We are interested!**
- ▼ Show the community what your group has been doing!
- ▼ **NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED!**
- ▼ Just shoot and e-mail!
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- ▼ Tell us what's happening in the photo
- ▼ **Please do NOT crop your photos.**
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# Sheriff's reports

## Man who slashed acquaintance arrested

Lake County Sheriff's Detectives identified and arrested a Gages Lake man after he used a knife and slashed another man during an argument.



Anthony E. Osmena

On April 27, at approximately 9:20 a.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies responded to a Lake County hospital to meet with medical staff regarding a man brought into the emergency room. Sheriff's deputies learned that the victim, a 24-year-old man of Round Lake Beach, was in surgery, in critical condition.

Further investigation revealed the victim was in a car with Anthony E. Osmena, 23, of the 17800 block of West Big Oaks Road, Gages Lake. The victim and Osmena started arguing with each other. It is unclear what the argument was about. The driver of the car pulled over in the area of Eastwood Avenue and Chipewa Road, Gages Lake, to drop Osmena off. The victim and Osmena both exited the vehicle and continued arguing. Osmena

produced a knife and slashed the victim's stomach open. The wound was so severe, part of the victim's intestinal tract fell out of the slash wound.

The driver of the car immediately drove the victim to the hospital.

After identifying Osmena as the suspect in the case, sheriff's detectives arrested him at his home. After reviewing the facts and circumstances of the incident, the Lake County State's Attorney's Office approved the following charges: Aggravated Battery with a Deadly Weapon (Class 3 Felony), Aggravated Battery (Class 3 Felony), Aggravated Battery in a Public Way (Class 3 Felony), and Unlawful Use of a Weapon (Class A Misdemeanor).

The victim remains hospitalized, and his condition is improving.

### Inmate death investigation

On May 3, at approximately 7:26 a.m., a Lake County Sheriff's Correctional Officer was conducting rounds in Pod 3 Southeast. While doing his rounds, the correctional officer observed an inmate, a 61-year-old man, of Chicago, lying

on his bed and the inmate appeared to be unresponsive. The correctional officer called to the inmate, but he did not answer. The correctional officer then entered the inmate's cell to try and wake him, but found him unconscious and not breathing.

The correctional officer immediately called a medical emergency on the radio and summoned nursing staff and an ambulance. Staff performed CPR and utilized an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). Waukegan paramedics arrived and took over primary care. After performing medical care for an extended period of time, the man was pronounced deceased.

The man was initially remanded to the Lake County Jail on April 26, 2024, to serve a 60-day jail sentence, after pleading guilty to driving while having a revoked driver's license. The man did not have a cellmate, as he was assigned to a single-inmate cell in Pod 3 Southeast. Rounds were conducted at least 30 minutes prior to the incident, and at that time, the inmate did not appear to be in distress.

There did not appear to be any suspicious marks or injuries on the inmate's body, however, an autopsy will be

conducted by the Lake County Coroner's Office. The inmate had underlying health conditions.

Per protocol, the Lake County Sheriff's Office requested the assistance of the Lake County Major Crime Task Force to conduct an independent investigation.

### Lake County Major Crimes Task Force assists in death investigation

On Wednesday, May 1, at approximately 9:21 a.m., the Vernon Hills Police Department was dispatched to single family home in the 400 block of Cherry Valley Road after receiving a report of two deceased persons inside the residence. Upon arrival, officers located two victims in the home, both with apparent gunshot wounds. Both were pronounced dead at the scene. The Lake County Major Crimes Task Force (LC-MCTF) was contacted to assist in the evidentiary portion of the investigation.

The Lake County Coroner's Office was notified and responded to the scene.

The deceased have been identified as married couple 67-year-old Victoria Ceja, and

77-year-old Ramiro Ceja, both of Vernon Hills. On Thursday, May 2, 2024, autopsies were conducted at the Lake County Coroner's Office. Preliminary autopsy results indicate that Mrs. Ceja died from multiple gunshot wounds and Mr. Ceja died as a result of a gunshot wound.

The incident remains under investigation by the Vernon Hills Police Department and the LCMCTF. Preliminary indications suggest that this is a tragic incident of murder-suicide and there is not believed to be any threat to the public.

### Reckless driving leads to multi-vehicle crash

'Road rage' is suspected in a multi-vehicle crash that occurred in Long Grove.

On May 1, at approximately 7:00 a.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies responded to Route 83 and Gilmer Road for a multi-vehicle traffic crash.

Preliminary investigation shows a Chevrolet Blazer, driven by a 48-year-old man of Grayslake, and a black sedan were traveling at a high rate of speed, southbound on Route 83. Witnesses reported both vehicles were weaving in and

out of traffic. As the two drivers approached Gilmer Road, the driver of the Chevrolet abruptly changed lanes in front of the black sedan. The rear of the Chevrolet clipped the front of the sedan, causing the Chevrolet to roll.

The Chevrolet then struck two vehicles that were stopped, both facing northbound on Route 83 in the left turn lane to turn onto westbound Gilmer Road. Those two vehicles were pushed backwards into a garbage truck and a box truck. The driver of the black sedan fled from the scene.

The occupants of the first two vehicles struck by the Chevrolet were transported to an area hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. The driver of the Chevrolet required extrication from his vehicle, and he too was transported to an area hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. A total of four people from the three vehicles were transported to the hospital.

The drivers of the garbage truck and box truck were uninjured.

The investigation into the crash continues, and criminal charges will be filed.

# Hi-LITER Classifieds

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**Martials:** I beam 4 1/2 in x 10in x 19 1/2 Ft, I Beam AL 2 1/2 x 4in x 7 & 8Ft, 2 x 9 x 19Ft, **Grain Equipment:** Grain Bin, **Farm Toys: Tools and Shop:** Air Compressor, **Livestock Equipment,** T Posts, 4 FT Feed Tough Calf Chains, Hog Snair, **Sporting:** Snowmobile Trailer, **Misc:** Ex Ladder, Argo Prower PTO Generator, AC Rear Rims, & Much More.

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\*On set purchase with factory select covers. Not applicable on previous purchases. One coupon per set purchase. See store for details. Offer ends 5-18-2023.

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Twin XL Starting @

**\$399**

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Great for watching TV or reading in bed

Reduces snoring & acid reflux effects

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