

# Hi-LITER

~ including McHenry County News

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## Richardson 'World's Largest' corn maze honors ag icon John Deere this year

Cynthia Wolf  
CONTRIBUTOR

The same year that Spring Grove's Richardson Farm was established in 1836, a man named John Deere moved to Illinois, discovering that the state's sticky, clay soil slowed farmers, who often had to stop every few feet to scrape the dirt off of their cast-iron plows.

Deere's invention the next year of a self-scouring steel plow revolutionized agriculture — in the U.S. and around the world.

In celebration of that milestone — and Deere & Co.'s continuing ag and construction equipment innovation prowess — this year's "World's Largest Corn Maze" is an homage to Deere. The public will be welcomed to take it all in — as well as all of the other fun to be had at the Richardson Adventure Farm — Thursdays through Sundays, Sept. 7-Oct. 27.

A portrait of John Deere is featured in the southwest corner of the rectangular, 28-acre maze this year, with a depiction of the original, steel, moldboard plow pulled by a horse in the southeast corner.

Also featured, along with the company's tagline, are a couple of Deere & Co.'s more modern offerings: a construction loader (with a pumpkin in the bucket), and a quad track tractor. At the center of this year's 10.8 miles of trails? A hammer and anvil, representing Deere's humble start as a blacksmith.

"We always have fun working out the details of each year's maze," said George Richardson, who operates the farm at 909 English Prairie Road, Spring Grove, with his wife, Wendy, brother, Robert, Robert's wife, Carol, George's son, Ryan, and Ryan's wife, Kristen.

In the spring, Idaho-based MazePlay once again brought its special planter that uses GPS to drop seeds precisely, creating the maze design and leaving gaps for the trails, Richardson said.

When in bloom, a 12-acre sunflower maze is included with the price of admission, too. Visitors are encouraged to check richardsonadventurefarm.com or find Richardson "World's Largest" Corn Maze on social media for updates.

Of course, hiking through miles of towering, golden corn or vibrant flowers is far from the picturesque farm's only draw. Family fun abounds here. There are jumping pillows, pedal karts, giant slides, a train ride, a carousel, 50-foot viewing tower, pig races, an expansive gift shop with a wine sampling bar, and many indoor restrooms.

Add to that food trucks, as well as a new, 54-foot-by-90-foot, concrete-floored, enclosed Barrel House beer pavilion (now under construction), where 9th Hour Brewing craft beers and more will flow.

See CORN MAZE, Page 4



GEORGE RICHARDSON PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN

Above: The 2024 Richardson Adventure Farm "World's Largest" Corn Maze design pays homage to agricultural icon John Deere.

Left: A train and carousel are part of the family fun at the farm. The adventure farm opens for the fall season Saturday, Sept. 7.



TOM FUNK PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN



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# Annual report highlights Lake County's fiscal responsibility

December 1 annually marks the beginning of Lake County's new financial fiscal year. But for the accounting team in the County Finance Department, this date starts the clock for them to complete the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) for the year prior.

The ACFR provides a detailed and transparent overview of the County's financial condition, performance and activities. Governments typically issue their financials 180 days after the close of their fiscal year. The fiscal year 2023 ACFR, which was completed in May and is available online at <https://www.lakecountyil.gov/DocumentCenter/View/76082/2023-Annual-Comprehensive-Financial-Report?bidId=>, references Lake County's strong financial position, detailed breakdowns of revenue and expenditures, an overview of significant capital projects, the audit process and the County's future outlook.

"Lake County goes above and beyond what is required so that our residents can be confident in our financial transparency and commitment to sound fiscal management," said Sandy Hart, Lake County Board Chair. "We provide the latest ACFR and previous reports dating back more than 10 years online."

As state statute requires, an audit is conducted by independent certified public accountants. Lake County's

financial statements were audited by Baker Tilly US, LLP, a firm of licensed certified public accountants. The Lake County Finance Department works diligently throughout the audit process and collaborates closely with various departments to ensure all financial data is accurate and comprehensive. These efforts then culminate in the issuance of the audit to outside entities such as Moody's, and Standard and Poor's.

"We are committed to sharing easily understandable and clear insights into the County's finances with the public," said Paul Frank, Lake County Financial and Administrative Committee Chair and Board Member for District 11. "I congratulate the Finance Department staff for completing this important report and thank them for their commitment to transparency and excellence in budgeting."

Lake County was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association for the fiscal year 2022 ACFR. This award is presented to governmental entities that demonstrate a high standard of financial reporting.

"I would like to thank all of our County departments for all their hard work and dedication in successfully issuing the audit," said Melissa Gallagher, Chief Financial Officer. "Their teamwork and commitment have made this achievement possible."



SUBMITTED PHOTO HI-LITER/MCN

## Interns honored

Recently the high school interns that completed the Manufacturing Pathways Consortium's Rotational Internship program were honored. The interns were interviewed about their experiences working in the local manufacturing industry. The Advance McHenry County funding provided by the County Board has provided 281 opportunities for high school students to gain valuable workplace skills at 33 area manufacturers over the past 3 years. Visit <https://www.mchenry.edu/news/2024/08/rotational-internship-celebration-24.html> to learn more about the program.

# SWALCO holding two events September 21

## Recycle-O-Rama event in Mudelein

The Solid Waste Agency of Lake County, SWALCO, will be holding a Reuse & Recycle-O-Rama event on Saturday, Sept. 21 from 9 a.m. to noon at Fremont Township Campus.

Items collected at the event will be reused, recycled and donated. Participants are asked to have items in their trunk. Stay in your vehicle and pop the trunk, items will be grabbed by staff and you can go.

This is a free event and only household items will be accepted. The following is a list of items accepted at the event:

- Confidential documents (for shredding, max of 4 banker boxes per vehicle). No businesses, household personal/confidential docs only.
- Shoes – all types of footwear. Tie pairs together with laces, rubber band or zip tie.
- Stuffed/plush animals, dolls & toys. No other toys accepted.
- Clothing – new, gently used or worn (all sizes, fabrics and types). Please make sure items are clean and bagged.
- Accessories: belts, scarves, hats, purses, duffle bags and backpacks.
- Bed and table linens, towels (including sheets, comforters, quilts, blankets, tablecloths)
- Eyeglasses, hearing aids and keys
- Fire extinguishers & auto batteries. No other batteries accepted.
- CO and Smoke detectors
- Books for reuse: no wet, damaged, moldy or odorous books, phone books, magazines, newspapers, coloring books or encyclopedias.
- Eclipse glasses – new or gently used – max of 25 per vehicle (will be donated for reuse to Astronomers Without Borders)
- Musical instruments – donated to children's musical program (no keyboards or drums)
- US flags, empty pill bottles & yarn
- Household electronics: phones, computers, tvs, holiday lights.

For a comprehensive list of accepted and not accepted clothing and textiles please visit [swalco.org](http://swalco.org).

The Fremont Township Campus is located at 22376 Erhart Road, Mundelein.

## Household chemical waste collection event in Zion

The next SWALCO mobile household chemical waste collection event will be held on Saturday, Sept. 21 from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Zion-Benton Township High School. HCW mobile events are available only by appointment and scheduling can be done on their website at [www.swalco.org](http://www.swalco.org).

Collections are for residential waste only, no business waste will be accepted. All SWALCO HCW collections events are free for Illinois residents only.

Accepted items at this event include: aerosol prod-

ucts, antifreeze and motor oil, fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, fluorescent light bulbs/CFLs, furniture stripper and varnishes, gasoline and kerosene, household batteries (lithium and rechargeable only), household cleaners, oil-based/flamma-

ble paints and removers, solvent cleaners, and pool/hot tub chemicals.

For a list on items that are not accepted please visit the website at [www.swalco.org](http://www.swalco.org).

Zion-Benton Township High School is located at 3901 21st Street, Zion.

# HI-LITER

~ including McHenry County News  
1102 Ann Street, Delavan, WI 53115

As of Feb. 9, 2022 Hi-Liter is the successor publication to McHenry County News

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## Lake County Sheriff's Office, City of Waukegan to share Tactical Response Team

The Lake County Sheriff's Office and City of Waukegan Police Department have entered into a service-sharing agreement that will increase safety and decrease costs.

The Waukegan Police Department is joining the Lake County Sheriff's Tactical Response Team (TRT). This partnership will unify the specialized resources, expertise, and personnel of both agencies into a single, highly capable unit, ensuring an effective response to critical incidents for the over 220,000 residents both agencies serve.

By combining the strengths of the two agencies, the team will have access to a broader range of specialized skills, equipment, and personnel. This will allow the team to respond quickly and effectively to some of the most complex situations, including hostage situations and high-risk warrant operations.

Joint training programs and shared resources will contribute to long-term cost savings for Lake County taxpayers, and result in a unified approach to highly technical tactical operations.

The team will continue training monthly, and

collectively hundreds of hours a year, beyond the standard training required of police officers. The team will be activated for high-risk situations that need specialized staff and equipment to de-escalate and save lives. The team will also be activated for high-profile events to ensure the safety of the public. Being a team based in Lake County, only responding to incidents in Lake County, the deployment time will be less than that of similar TRT/SWAT teams.

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "A quick response from highly trained personnel is essential during high-risk situations such as hostage situations or armed barricaded person calls. This collaboration will not only ensure we are keeping our community safe, but it will foster a deeper partnership between our two agencies."

Waukegan Chief of Police Edgar Navarro added, "Operational efficiency has always been a priority. Collaborating with the Lake County Sheriff gives us the opportunity to do more. Enhancing our efforts provides additional resources that benefits the safety of our residents."

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W.A. McConnell Foundation

SUBMITTED PHOTO HI-Liter/MCN

## Support Richmond's oldest building at Sept. 7 fundraiser

The W.A. McConnell Foundation (WAMF) is hosting a craft beer and bourbon tasting from 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 7, in historic downtown Richmond, Illinois. Advanced tickets are available for \$35 online at <https://www.wamcconnellfoundation.org/> and at Anderson's Candy Shop, 10301 N Main St, Richmond, IL. They entitle those age 21 and older to 10 tastings of beer and/or spirits. Sampling tickets also will be available at the door the day of the event – rain or shine.

Special thanks to following breweries and distilleries who are generously donating their product for this fundraiser:

- Sew Hop'd Brewery Huntley, IL
- Spirit Water Brewery & Distillery Cary, IL
- Heaven's Door Distillery Pleasureville, KY
- McFleshman's Brewery Appleton, WI
- Appleton Beer Factory Appleton, WI

The tasting event will take place at 10400 Main St, Richmond, across the street from Olde No. 90. This fun event will also feature talks by historian Kurt Begalka and local award-winning storyteller Jim May. WAMF volunteers will lead tours showing the work already completed to stabilize this historic gem.

Proceeds from this event will be used to rehabilitate Olde No. 90's porch. Restoration estimates indicate that it will take \$10,000. With public support and grant funding, W.A. McConnell Foundation intends to save this valuable piece of history.

The W.A. McConnell Foundation is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving the treasured history of the greater Richmond area in Illinois, protecting the legacy of its founders, and promoting its historic downtown for the benefit of generations to come.

## Spring Grove Storytelling Festival will feature various styles, authors, workshops

The Spring Grove Storytelling Festival will be held on Saturday, Sept. 21 from noon to 6 p.m. It will feature stories of adventure, hope and humor. Four stages under large canvas tents will offer award-winning storytellers from Chicagoland and around the country in an outdoor setting for all ages, families and couples to attend.

"Everyone loves to hear stories, either at bedtime or on the radio," said Jim May, artistic director. "This is a great opportunity to enjoy stories in a historic American Chautauqua-like experience. You will love it."

There are separate stages for families, adults, and an

open mic session so attendees can tell their own stories with encouragement from emcees. Suggested topics may include "My favorite memory of grandparents telling me stories," funny family episodes, and perhaps, passed down through generations, stories of hardship, heroism, and lost fortune as well as of tenderness and heroism.

"Some of the best stories are shared on this open mic" said May, Emmy-award winning storyteller and author.

This third annual festival is inspired by other outdoor storytelling events around the country that regularly draw large crowds. Spring Grove this year is expecting 300

attendees. In the past the Illinois Storytelling Festival, of which the current event is an offspring, regularly drew 2000 from 14 state to the same village park in Spring Grove.

Master storyteller and award-winning author, Loren Niemi, of Minneapolis will conduct a pre-festival master class from 9-11 a.m. Saturday morning for those who would like to study, in depth, storytelling, writing, story creation and an opportunity to tell and be critiqued at the 'open mic' portion of the festival (optional).

For all tickets for class and festival events, go to [springgrovestorytelling.org](http://springgrovestorytelling.org) or purchase tickets at the event.

## Trees take center stage at next Talk and Tour event

The September installment of the McHenry County 2024 Talk and Tour workshop series will focus on the importance of trees in urban and suburban planning.

The free presentation, "The Value of Trees in Our Communities," will take place from 1 to 3 p.m. Friday, Sept. 13, at Trout Valley Lodge, 1 Howard's Way, Trout Valley.

Whether you are an elected official, municipal staff or a member of the public, this program will help you understand why our trees are important, and how to protect them.

While everyone understands that trees are a vital element of urban infrastructure, the true benefits they provide our communities are often undervalued. When properly managed, trees in urban areas help reduce flooding, clean our air, lower summer tem-

peratures, reduce energy use, stabilize soil, provide wildlife habitat, enhance property values, and more.

However, urban forests are often not managed to reach their full potential because all these profound benefits are not well-understood.

Experts who will present on the subject will be Joe Hansen, forester and tree preservation officer for the Village of Wilmette, and David Hall, chairman of the Trout Valley Nature Conservancy Board, who will discuss the village's urban forest and Tree Protection Ordinance. The program will end with a guided tour of Trout Valley's oak woodlands.

The Talk and Tour series, now in its third year, is co-hosted by the McHenry County Planning and Development Department and the Environmental Defenders of

McHenry County. County government and the Environmental Defenders teamed up in 2022 to present a series of workshops that showcase the environmental and economic benefits of innovative best management practices that have been successfully implemented in our region. Each of the best management practices are designed to protect and maintain the integrity of natural resources, reduce flooding in communities, and promote land, water and energy conservation.

The event is free, but attendees are asked to register in advance by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/BMPTourSignup>.

For more information, email McHenry County Water Resources Specialist Scott Kuykendall at [SHKuykendall@mchenrycountyil.gov](mailto:SHKuykendall@mchenrycountyil.gov) or call 815-334-2863.



SUBMITTED PHOTO HI-Liter/MCN

Left: The Richardson Adventure Farm zipline ferries an adventurous youth northward across the grounds from the farm's 50-foot-tall observation tower. Above: A family explores the Richardson Adventure Farm corn maze during its 20th anniversary. This year's fall fun starts Saturday, Sept. 7, and continues until Oct. 27.

# You ought to be in pictures!

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## Pet of the week

**Natalia, a Hound mix, is about a year old. She is spayed, up-to-date on shots (incl. rabies), 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](http://www.saveapetil.org/adopt).**

## • Corn maze

(Continued from front page)

That's not to mention the air cannons, live music on weekends, Zorbing, a zip line — just bring your face, this place will put a smile on it.

"I'm looking forward to seeing people enjoy the things we've worked so hard to create for them," Ryan Richardson said. "Between the zip line, the time spent around campfires with family and friends — just the whole experience — everything is an Instagram moment on the farm."

Regular Richardson Adventure Farm admission ranges from \$20 for ages 3 through 12 Sept. 7-29 to \$30 for ages 13 and up on October weekends. Those 2 and younger are admitted free. Full details are available at [richardsonadventurefarm.com](http://richardsonadventurefarm.com) under the Hours & Pricing dropdown, where one also can find campfire and picnic site rental information.





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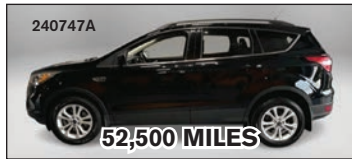
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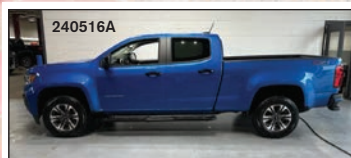
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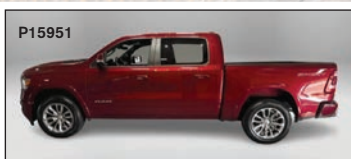
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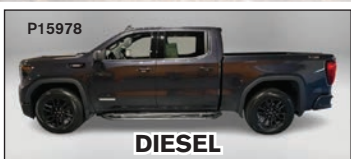
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**Court & crime news**

# Man sentenced to 50 years in prison for murder

On August 29, a Lake County Judge sentenced a man to 50 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections for the 2022 fatal shooting of a Fox Lake man



**Azmi Ibrahim**

Azmi Ibrahim, 38, was convicted on January 22, 2024, of First-Degree Murder, after a jury trial before the Honorable Judge D. Christopher Lombardo.

After the sentencing, Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart stated, "This brutal murder with an assault weapon deserves our community's loudest condemnation. We will continue to support the victim's family as we also work with law enforcement and legislator stakeholders to limit high-risk individuals from accessing firearms. The Violent Crimes Unit continues to hold accountable the most dangerous offenders, and we take some satisfaction knowing that this particular individual will spend decades behind bars where he will not be able to hurt anyone in Lake County."

In December 2022, Fox Lake Police Department officers responded to a report of shots fired at an apartment building on Mineola Ave. When officers arrived, they found Roy Hoffman, 77, with a large gunshot wound to the head. Mr. Hoffman was pronounced deceased at the scene.

Law enforcement officers eventually learned through phone records, eyewitnesses, and surveillance video that Mr. Hoffman had arranged to have a "romantic relationship" with a woman on the night of the murder. This investigation led to the arrest of Ibrahim on December 13, 2022.

During the sentencing hearing, Chief Deputy of the Criminal Division Jeffery Facklam and ASA Kyle Doyle from the Human Trafficking Task Force, argued to Judge Lombardo that Ibrahim perpetrated a vicious attack when he pulled the trigger on a vulnerable, unarmed, 77-year-old veteran man with a walker. Prosecutors pointed out that this shooting was not something impulsive or spontaneous, but rather a conscious decision Ibrahim made from the moment he left his car with

the firearm, to the moment he shot Mr. Hoffman. Prosecutors asked Ibrahim be sentenced to at least 60 years in prison.

Sentencing laws allowed Judge Lombardo to sentence Ibrahim to a range of 45 to natural life in prison with the term to be served at 100%.

Prior to trial, Ibrahim was being held in the Lake County Jail on a \$5 million bond. (This cash bond was set by a judge in late 2022, before the effective date of bail reform.) After the guilty verdict, Judge Lombardo revoked Ibrahim's ability to post bond. Ibrahim received 627 days of credit time served.

## Sheriff's K9 Axel tracked intoxicated man fleeing from traffic crash

A Wauconda man was arrested after driving intoxicated, causing a traffic crash, and fleeing from the scene on foot in Long Grove.



**Yiyari C. Salvador**

On August 28, at approximately 3:25 p.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies responded to Route 22 and Old McHenry Road for a traffic crash. The 911 caller indicated the man who rear-ended his car fled on foot. He provided a description of the offender to Lake County Sheriff's 911 Emergency Telecommunicators. Telecommunicators provided the description to responding deputies, who arrived and established a perimeter.

Sheriff's Deputy Gauer and K9 Axel responded to the scene. K9 Axel obtained the scent of the man who fled and immediately began tracking. K9 Axel tracked nearly two miles, into Heron Creek Forest Preserve. Sheriff's 911 emergency telecommunicators informed Lake County Forest Preserve Rangers of the situation. The suspect, later identified as Yiyari C. Salvador, 26, of the 200 block of Marlene Court, Wauconda, was located next to a forest preserve trail by a sheriff's deputy and forest preserve ranger. Salvador was taken into custody without incident.

Sheriff's deputies found Salvador was under the influence of alcohol and subsequently charged with: Two counts of driving under the influence of alcohol, Leaving

the scene of a traffic crash, and Resisting/obstructing a peace officer

Salvador was transported to the Lake County Jail and processed. He is next due in court on September 25.

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "This is yet another great example of collaboration between sheriff's employees and outside agencies. Our 911 emergency telecommunicators obtained and relayed critical information to sheriff's deputies and forest preserve rangers in the field. From there, our deputies established a perimeter, and a sheriff's canine successfully tracked the suspect to an awaiting sheriff's deputy and forest preserve ranger."

Nobody was injured in the crash.

## Sheriff's Office investigating serious hit-and-run traffic crash; asking for public's assistance

The Lake County Sheriff's Office is asking those who have a dash camera and traveled on Route 53, anywhere between Route 83 and Lake Cook Road, in Long Grove on Sunday, August 18, between 4:10 p.m. and 4:20 p.m., to contact the Lake County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 4:15 p.m., sheriff's deputies responded to Route 53, west of Robert Parker Coffin Road, for a hit-and-run traffic crash, involving a bicyclist. Preliminary investigation shows the bicyclist, a 63-year-old man of Kildeer, was traveling south on Route 53 on the shoulder of the roadway. The driver of a grey pickup truck was also traveling south. The driver of the pickup truck passed a slower vehicle by driving onto the shoulder and into the grass. As the driver made this illegal maneuver, they struck the bicyclist and fled southbound on Route 53.

The bicyclist was initially transported to Northwest Community Hospital with serious injuries and later transferred to Advocate Lutheran General Hospital, as his condition deteriorated. He remains in critical condition.

The Lake County Sheriff's Office is asking that anyone who might have a dash camera, including commercial vehicles with cameras, to contact the Lake County Sheriff's Office Technical Crash Investigations Team at 847-377-4000.

## Man charged after trespassing on active airport runway, and in unoccupied aircraft

A Zion man was charged with criminal trespassing at a Lake County airport last week, following an unusual set of circumstances.



**Erik Deanda-Gonzalez**

On August 20, at approximately 11:55 a.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies were dispatched to Campbell Airport in unincorporated Grayslake, for a report of a Toyota racing back and forth on an active runway.

The driver of the Toyota, later identified as Erik Deanda-Gonzalez, 30, of the 3300 block of Holdridge Avenue, Zion, then parked his car and began entering hangers at the airport. Sheriff's deputies arrived to find Deanda-Gonzalez inside of an aircraft parked near a taxiway. Employees at the airfield informed deputies that Deanda-Gonzalez did not own the aircraft and had no business being inside of it.

Deanda-Gonzalez exited the aircraft and spoke to sheriff's deputies, and they all walked back toward Deanda-Gonzalez' Toyota. Sheriff's deputies asked Deanda-Gonzalez questions about his actions at the airfield, when, without warning, Deanda-Gonzalez turned around, ran back toward the aircraft, and attempted to crawl back inside. Sheriff's deputies pulled him out of the aircraft and put him into custody.

Deanda-Gonzalez did not provide any explanation for his actions, and he was transported to the Lake County Jail. Sheriff's deputies located ammunition in Deanda-Gonzalez' vehicle, prior to it being towed from the scene. No firearm was located.

After reviewing the facts and circumstances of the incident, the Lake County State's Attorney's Office approved the following charges: Criminal Trespass to an Airport Runway (Class 3 Felony), Criminal Trespass to an Airport (Class 4 Felony), Resisting a Peace Officer (Class A Misdemeanor), Unlawful Possession of Firearm Ammunition Without a FOID Card (Class A Misdemeanor), and Criminal Trespass to Property (Class B Misdemeanor).

On August 21, Deanda-Gonzalez appeared in First Appearance Court, where he was released with conditions. He is next due in court on September 3.

The FAA was notified of the incident.

## Man found guilty of unlawful use of weapons by felon and reckless discharge of firearm

On August 27, Rudy Villarreal, Jr. was found guilty of Unlawful Use of Weapons by Felon and Reckless Discharge of a Firearm after a two-day bench trial before the Honorable Judge Mark R. Gerhardt.

Evidence presented at trial proved that Villarreal, a convicted murderer, went to the restaurant formerly known as La Placita - Café Botenera in downtown Marengo, IL. Villarreal was armed with a 9 mm semi-automatic handgun.

While there, he encountered his wife who had an active Order of Protection against him. An altercation ensued between Villarreal, his wife and a woman that Villarreal was with outside the restaurant. During the altercation, Villarreal brandished his firearm and shot it three times over his head. Villarreal fled the area immediately afterwards. Several eyewitnesses who were interviewed by the police identified Villarreal during the bench trial. Three 9 mm fired cartridge cases were recovered on the walkway outside of the restaurant.



**Rudy Villarreal, Jr.**

The sentencing is scheduled in October, 2024. The charge of Unlawful Use of a Weapon by Felon is non-probationable, with a sentencing range of 3 to 14 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections. Villarreal was taken into custody to await sentencing.

McHenry County State's Attorney Patrick Kenneally recognizes the hard work done by the Marengo Police Department in their professional investigation into this case. This case was prosecuted by Assistant State's Attorney Maria Marek and William Bruce.

On August 23, a Lake County Judge sentenced a man to 10 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections for a 2020 fatal DUI rollover crash.

## Man sentenced to 10 years in prison for 2020 aggravated DUI that left two dead

On August 23, a Lake County Judge sentenced a man to 10 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections for a 2020 fatal DUI rollover crash.

Jose S. Aguirre, 30, was convicted on June 6, 2024, of nine counts of Aggravated DUI, after a jury trial before the Honorable Judge D. Christopher Lombardo.

Today at the sentencing hearing, prosecutors asked that Aguirre be sentenced to at least 18 years in the Department of Corrections.

After the court's ruling, Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart stated, "While we are disappointed the sentence was not higher, this prison term sends the correct message that dangerous drivers will be held accountable in Lake County. And we continue to grieve with the victims over this horrific crime. We will support them and continue our work with our community partners such as schools, the Health Department, and Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists to increase awareness and save lives. I want to continue to thank our experienced trial team and victim-support professionals for their work and their assistance to the impacted families."

On September 27, 2020, around 3:20 a.m., a Round Lake Police Officer attempted to stop a white Chevy Traverse that was speeding. The vehicle, later determined to be owned and driven by Aguirre, refused to stop. The officer reported the Chevy Traverse to reach a speed of 123 mph in a 45-mph zone and terminated the brief chase due to safety concerns.

Shortly after the chase

was terminated, the officer came upon the Chevy Traverse which had crashed into a wooded area near Route 134 and Main St. in Round Lake. Juan Renteria-Becerra, 34, and Edgar Herrera, 30, were both passengers in the vehicle and were pronounced deceased at the scene. Jorge Trevino, 32, was also a passenger in the vehicle and sustained non-life-threatening injuries.

During the sentencing hearing, Assistant State's Attorney Ryan Koehl and Assistant State's Attorney Eduardo Zermeno argued to Judge Lombardo that Aguirre's behavior on the night of the rollover crash was extremely reckless and selfish. Prosecutors pointed out that Aguirre showed a complete disregard for the safety of the passengers in the vehicle when he made the decision to attempt and elude the police by exceeding speeds of over 110-mph and argued that these irresponsible actions led to the deaths of two people.

Sentencing laws allowed Judge Lombardo to sentence Aguirre to a range of 6 to 28 years in prison with the term to be served at 85%.

Prior to the trial, Aguirre was being held in the Lake County Jail on a \$1 million bond. (This cash bond was set by a judge before the effective date of bail reform.) After the guilty verdict, Judge Lombardo revoked Aguirre's ability to post bail. Aguirre received 611 days of credit time served.

## Wojdakowski sentenced to 3 years for aggravated DUI

Patrick D. Kenneally, McHenry County State's Attorney, announces that 45-year-old Todd Wojdakowski, formerly of McHenry, Illinois, was sentenced to 3 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections for the offense of Aggravated Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol pursuant to a negotiated plea in front of the Honorable Mark Gerhardt on August 28.



**Todd Wojdakowski**

On September 15, 2022, Wojdakowski was driving in the area of Chapel Hill and Lincoln Road in McHenry, Illinois. Wojdakowski approached the intersection and struck the rear end of a vehicle stopped at the red light. Officers arrived on scene and ultimately made contact with Wojdakowski. Officers noted Wojdakowski's eyes to be red, bloodshot, and glassy and to be unsteady on his feet. Officers further observed a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage coming from his breath and slurred speech during conversations with Wojdakowski. Wojdakowski refused all field sobriety tests, and an empty bottle of Fireball whiskey was found in his vehicle.

Wojdakowski was previously convicted of reckless homicide out of Lake County in 1999, after he crashed his vehicle into a utility pole due to being under the influence of alcohol, killing his passenger.

The case was investigated by the McHenry Police Department.

On September 27, 2020, around 3:20 a.m., a Round Lake Police Officer attempted to stop a white Chevy Traverse that was speeding. The vehicle, later determined to be owned and driven by Aguirre, refused to stop. The officer reported the Chevy Traverse to reach a speed of 123 mph in a 45-mph zone and terminated the brief chase due to safety concerns.

Shortly after the chase

**COURT & CRIME**  
continued on page 7

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# • Court & crime (Continued from page 6)

## K9 Danno apprehends domestic battery offender

Lake County Sheriff's K9 Danno took a Beach Park man into custody, after he hit and choked a woman.



**Ruben Ruiz**

On August 31, at approximately 6:45 p.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies were dispatched to a manufactured home in the 38700 block of North Sheridan Road, Beach Park, for a domestic battery in progress. The 911 caller informed sheriff's telecommunicators that her boyfriend hit and choked her. The victim was able to exit the home and sheriff's deputies established a perimeter around it.

Shortly after establishing the perimeter, the suspect, Ruben Ruiz, 26, of same residence, attempted to escape out of a window, but retreated when he saw sheriff's deputies. Sheriff's deputies, along with K9 Danno entered the home to arrest Ruiz. Ruiz hid under a bed and refused to follow the instructions

from sheriff's deputies. Ruiz was warned that if he did not surrender, K9 Danno would be released. Ruiz continued his refusal to surrender and K9 Danno bit Ruiz' arm and he then surrendered.

Ruiz was evaluated by paramedics for the dog bite, and was transported to the Lake County Jail.

After reviewing the facts and circumstances of the incident, the Lake County State's Attorney's Office charged Ruiz with two counts of domestic battery and obstructing a peace officer.

## Sheriff's Telecommunicators, K9 teams collaborate to arrest fleeing man who threatened roommate with knife

Lake County Sheriff's Telecommunicators, Lake County Sheriff's Deputies, and Lake County Sheriff's Canine Teams worked together to apprehend a violent man.

On August 30, at approximately 10:15 p.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies

responded to a residence in the 24800 block of West Crabtree Lane, Ingleside, for a report of a man threatening a roommate with a knife. Sheriff's deputies arrived and spoke to the victim, who said Sebastian Homuth, 30, of the same address, became enraged the victim was using the microwave.

Homuth retrieved a large kitchen knife and began pointing it at the victim. The victim backed away and ran toward his bedroom, but Homuth chased him with the knife in hand. The victim was able to get into his bedroom, lock the door, and call 911.

The victim informed sheriff's deputies that Homuth was still inside the residence. Sheriff's deputies determined the residence was subdivided into different apartments, so sheriff's deputies evacuated the others, due to Homuth's erratic behavior with a weapon. Following the evacuation of the others, sheriff's deputies attempted to communicate with Homuth, but Homuth did not respond. It was determined there was an additional exit Homuth could

have used prior to deputies arriving, and Homuth may have fled on foot.

Lake County Sheriff's Canine Teams Deputy Andrew Martini/K9 Danno and Deputy Matt Savage/K9 Odin responded to the scene. K9 Danno initially tracked Homuth for over a mile through the Grant Woods Forest Preserve. While tracking, it is likely Homuth knew the deputies were getting close, so he called 911 and reported an attack at the opposite end of the forest preserve.

Sheriff's telecommunicators quickly determined the 911 caller was Homuth. Sheriff's 911 telecommunicators used their skills to keep Homuth on the phone and talking, so they could narrow in on the location of the phone used to call 911. Sheriff's telecommunicators used the information they obtained, so the perimeter could be tightened around Homuth's location.

Sheriff's K9 Danno and K9 Odin located Homuth. Homuth was argumentative and didn't initially follow instructions to surrender. Sheriff's telecommunicators encouraged

Homuth to surrender, which he did, before one of the canines was released to apprehend him. He was taken into custody without incident.

Homuth was transported to the Lake County Jail, where he currently remains held. Homuth is currently refusing to go through the booking process at the jail, and will be held in the Lake County Jail until he is booked. He will then appear in First Appearance Court on the charges of: Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon, Disorderly Conduct - Misuse of 911 and Resisting a Peace Officer.

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "Behind every sheriff's response is a sheriff's emergency telecommunicator who goes above and beyond, tirelessly coordinating the response with precision and care. This is the second time in just a couple of days that our sheriff's telecommunicators and sheriff's canine teams collaborated to apprehend a fleeing suspect in our community. Excellent work to everyone involved!"

The Lake County Sheriff's Office thanks the Round Lake Police Department and Lake Villa Police Department for their assistance with this incident.

## Fatal single-vehicle crash under investigation

Lake County Sheriff's Crash Investigators are investigating an overnight single-vehicle fatal traffic crash that occurred in unincorporated Antioch.

On September 2, at approximately 4:45 a.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies responded to Grass Lake Road and Bluff Lane, unincorporated Antioch, for a vehicle versus tree traffic crash. A 2009 Pontiac Vibe was located on the south side of the roadway and both the car and tree had major damage.

The male driver, who has not yet been identified, was not wearing a seatbelt and was ejected from the vehicle. He was pronounced deceased at the scene.

The Lake County Coroner's Office responded and an autopsy is being scheduled.

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

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