

# Hi-LITER

~ including McHenry County News

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## James Lumber Center 2025 season offering an eclectic mix of musical performances

The James Lumber Center for the Performing Arts (JLC) at the College of Lake County offers entertainment from a wide range of musical genres. This season continues that tradition with renowned Mexican, rock, Americana, jazz, classical, and pop music artists gracing the JLC mainstage.

"We're bringing together a vibrant and diverse lineup of artists, from the classic groove of the Laurel Canyon sound to the high energy of New Orleans jazz," said Alisha Baum, executive director of the James Lumber Center. "We're especially proud to highlight famed local talent like social media star Drew Wiegman and veteran performer Ike Reilly, whose band has been called 'one of the best live bands in America' by The New York Times. We invite everyone to join us to experience the joy of live music together."

### Mariachi Herencia de Mexico: La Nueva Generacion Tour

Friday, Jan. 24  
With chart-topping albums and two Latin Grammy nominations, this young, virtuosic ensemble performs "La Nueva Generación Tour," a musical homage to Latin music and singers. Their unique spin on traditional mariachi combines swaggering jazz, driving horns and a vibrant percussion line, creating an explosion of colors and sounds all their own. Simultaneously honoring the past, celebrating the present and creating the future of mariachi music, this will be an electrifying and unforgettable night of Mexican music and culture. Tickets are \$34, or \$30 for seniors 65+ and military and \$15 for students.

### Ike Reilly: Lake County Film Premiere and Concert

Saturday, Feb. 1  
Don't Turn Your Back on Friday Night chronicles the life and decades-long career of Ike Reilly, Libertyville's own "Punk Rock Troubadour." The award-winning film masterfully weaves together over 40 years of footage with songs that reveal a complicated, formidable artist. Following the film, Reilly and his band mates will perform live. Tickets are \$25, \$22 for seniors 65+ and military and \$5 for students.

### Dustbowl Revival Present "A Laurel Canyon Retrospective"

Saturday, March 22  
Known for their vibrant live shows and a global fanbase, Dustbowl Revival performs a spicy cocktail of folky-funk and jangly rock 'n soul. The Americana outfit pays homage to the music of Southern California's rock and folk scene, reimagining the music of the Byrds, Joni Mitchell, CSNY and more. Tickets are \$25, or \$22 for seniors 65+ and military and \$12 for students.

### New Orleans Songbook: A Jazz at Lincoln Center Presents Production

Sunday, March 23  
Experience the soul of New Orleans and the spirit of Mardi Gras come to life in this amazing concert celebrating legendary composers and songs defining the Crescent City. Led by pianist Luther S. Allison and featuring vocalists Quiana Lynell and Milton Suggs, the trio brings the music of Jelly Roll Morton, Ellis Marsalis, Louis Armstrong



SUBMITTED PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN

Ike Reilly and his band will perform at the James Lumber Center for the Performing Arts after his film premiere on February 1. Tickets are available online at [www.jlcenter.clcillinois.edu](http://www.jlcenter.clcillinois.edu).

and more to life. Tickets are \$35, or \$30 for seniors 65+ and military and \$15 for students.

### Michael Cavanaugh: The Music of Billy Joel and Elton John

Friday, March 28  
Handpicked for Billy Joel for Broadway's Movin' Out, charismatic performer Michael Cavanaugh delivers an evening of iconic rock and pop

hits from two piano legends. Tickets are \$40, or \$37 for seniors 65+ and military and \$20 for students.

### Drew Wiegman

Saturday and Sunday, March 29-30  
Cellist, TikTok sensation and Lake County native Drew Wiegman performs selections from movie scores, pop hits, and original music. A self-taught musician, Wiegman inspires audiences with his soul-stir-

ring sound. Tickets are \$40, or \$35 for seniors 65+ and military and \$20 for students.

Tickets are available online at [www.jlcenter.clcillinois.edu](http://www.jlcenter.clcillinois.edu), by phone at (847) 543-2300, or in person at the JLC Box Office, 19351 West Washington Street in Grayslake. The JLC Box Office is open Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free parking is available. Concessions include soft drinks, beer, wine and light bites.

**ANTIOCH, IL**  
2025 COMMUNITY GUIDE

ANTIOCH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Amidst change, some things stand timeless.

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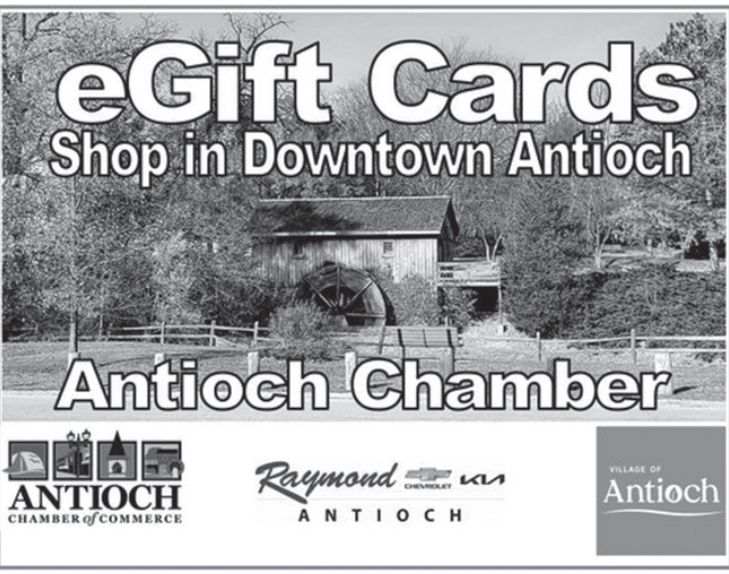
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SUBMITTED PHOTO HI-Liter/MCN

The Lake County History Symposium takes place virtually on Zoom from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on January 9 and 16. “Planes, Trains and Automobiles: Lake County Transportation,” is this year’s theme. Registration link can be found at [www.lcfdp.org](http://www.lcfdp.org).

## Explore Lake County’s transportation history at a virtual symposium

The 10th annual Lake County History Symposium takes place virtually on Zoom from 6:30–8:30 pm on January 9 and 16. “Planes, Trains and Automobiles: Lake County Transportation” is this year’s theme.

Experience engaging presentations from a diverse array of historians, ranging from seasoned professionals to authors to passionate hobbyists. This annual event unites individuals with a shared passion for delving into the rich tapestry of Lake County history.

Dive into a fascinating variety

of topics, including the history of Naval aviation at Naval Station Great Lakes, the tragic sinking of the Lady Elgin 165 years ago that claimed over 300 lives, and the monumental preparations for the 1926 Eucharistic Congress in Mundelein, which drew over 200,000 attendees.

“This event invites us to uncover the hidden and unexpected stories within our communities,” said Museum Educator Sarah Salto. “We’ll hear from history enthusiasts who bring to life the remarkable individuals and organizations that

have worked to shape and improve Lake County.”

The first evening features four presentations, while the second has three. Register for both days to experience all seven. Discussion will open at the end of the presentations for participants to ask questions and engage in dialogue. All ages are welcome. Tickets are free, but registration is required for each day you would like to attend. The program is sponsored by USG. Registration link can be found at [www.lcfdp.org/museum/history-symposium/](http://www.lcfdp.org/museum/history-symposium/).

## Nearly 300 new Illinois laws take effect in 2025

Includes digital driver’s licenses, salary transparency and health insurance changes

By Ben Szalinski  
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

Time to study up, Illinois. After the clock hit midnight on New Year’s Day, 293 new state laws took effect.

Those include some of the defining bills of the 2024 legislative session and others that will change how people get IDs, evaluate job postings and even cancel gym memberships.

In addition to the laws taking effect on Jan. 1, the state’s minimum wage will rise to \$15 to complete a ramp up initiated during Gov. JB Pritzker’s first month in office in 2019.

### Digital driver’s licenses

The secretary of state can begin creating a process to issue digital driver’s licenses and state IDs beginning in the new year after Pritzker signed House Bill 4592. Residents will still be required to receive a physical ID and agencies or private entities will not be required to accept digital IDs in place of physical IDs.

Providing a phone to police to show a digital ID also doesn’t give police consent to search a person’s cell phone.

### Salary transparency

Employers with 15 or more employees must include information about benefits and the salary range on job postings, according to House Bill 3129. The law will also apply to businesses hiring for remote work positions in Illinois.

“When employers aren’t transparent about pay, gender and racial wage gaps widen, costing women and people of color valuable compensation,” Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton said in a news release. “Illinois’ new Pay Transparency law is a resounding win for the working people who call our state home.”

### ‘Junk’ health insurance

Short-term, limited duration health insurance plans will be illegal in Illinois beginning Jan. 1. The plans, often called “junk insurance” by critics, do not meet the minimum standards of the federal Affordable Care Act.

The ban outlined in House Bill 2499 was part of Pritzker’s health insurance overhaul that lawmakers passed in the spring. It was aimed at reducing barriers to care for patients and making health care more affordable by expanding coverage requirements for insurance companies.

Short-term insurance plans are typically for people who have a lapse in health insurance coverage such as when they lose or change jobs, but they are different from COBRA benefits, which most employers are required to offer under federal law. Supporters of the bill argued the plans are deceptive and stick consumers with huge out-of-pocket costs, but others said the plans provide consumers with an affordable option to fill a gap in coverage.

### Caregiver discrimination

House Bill 2161 adds family responsibilities to the list of categories protected from discrimination and retaliation in the workplace. The new law prevents employers from taking adverse action against employees because of their responsibilities as a caregiver for a family member, which could cause them to miss work.

Bill sponsor Rep. Will Guzzardi, D-Chicago, told a House committee in April that pregnant women are a good example of who the bill is designed to help. He said pregnant women shouldn’t be passed up for a promotion or face other consequences at work in anticipation that they will be taking time off to care for their baby. Guzzardi stressed the bill does not protect employees who fail

to meet job performance requirements.

### AI regulations

New laws governing artificial intelligence take effect Jan. 1. It will be illegal to generate child pornography using AI, according to House Bill 4623. Supporters of the bill, including the Illinois Attorney General’s Office, said it is becoming more difficult to distinguish between real and AI-generated images. They said updating Illinois’ child pornography laws was a necessary step to allow law enforcement to identify and prosecute child pornography cases.

House bill 4875 also adds new protections to prohibit using AI to recreate a person’s voice, image or likeness for commercial purposes without the person’s consent. Recording artists can seek damages for violations of the law.

### Politics and religion at work

Employees can’t be required to sit through work meetings discussing religion or politics starting Jan. 1. Senate Bill 3649, an initiative of the Illinois AFL-CIO, creates new protections for employees who skip out on such meetings and prevents employers from retaliating against them.

The law does not prohibit discussing religion or politics at work, but employees are not required to participate in the discussions if such activities are not part of their job. The law excludes non-profit and advocacy groups where politics or religion may be part of job.

### Coming later in 2025

Pritzker’s signature health reform package goes into effect on Jan. 1, but most provisions don’t have to be implemented until the beginning of 2026. House Bill 5395 bans “step therapy,” which

requires patients to try and fail treatments preferred by insurance companies before they can receive the treatment recommended by their doctor.

It also bans insurance companies from requiring prior authorization for emergency in-patient mental health treatment, requires insurers to keep up-to-date lists of in-network providers and expands the power of the Illinois Department of Insurance to regulate premium rates.

Many hotels in Illinois will no longer be allowed to provide customers with single-use plastic soap and shampoo beginning July 1 under Senate Bill 2960. The move is designed to cut down on waste from single-use products. The Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association supported the change. Hotels with fewer than 50 rooms have until 2026 to make the change.

See NEW LAWS, Page 6

## First pediatric RSV death reported during the 2024 surveillance season in McHenry County

The McHenry County Department of Health (MCDH) is reporting the first pediatric death attributed to Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) of the 2024 surveillance season. RSV is a highly contagious virus that can cause severe respiratory illness, particularly in infants and young children.

RSV activity has been increasing over the last four weeks in McHenry County. The current transmission level is classified as moderate, which means there has been increased respiratory illness activity, though it is not yet at the peak for the season. RSV is currently rising in the 0-4 age group, while emergency department and inpatient visits among adults aged 65 and older remain low. This low level of RSV transmission in older adults is attributed to the effectiveness of the RSV vaccination, which offers protection against severe illness.

While RSV generally causes mild, cold-like symptoms such as congestion, a runny nose, irritability, decreased appetite, and fever, it can lead to more severe respiratory symptoms in infants. Severe symptoms of RSV in babies can include short, shallow, and abnormally fast breathing, a wheezing cough, nasal flaring, difficulty feeding due to breathing difficulties, unusual tiredness, a blue tint to the lips or fingernails, and fever. Parents and caregivers should seek medical care immediately if they notice these severe symptoms.

RSV spreads through droplets from coughs, sneezes, or contaminated surfaces. To help prevent the spread of the virus, it is important to cover coughs and sneezes, practice good hand hygiene by washing hands regularly, and clean frequently touched surfaces. It is also essential to avoid close contact with infants, such as kissing, when sick. Infants can contract RSV from family members or siblings who may have been exposed to the virus at school or daycare.

There are ways to protect your loved ones from severe RSV. For infants under one year of age, a preventive antibody called Beyfortus (mirsevimumab) is available, which provides protection against severe RSV illness. This antibody is administered to newborns and babies under 1 year of age born during or entering their first RSV season. It can be given alongside routine childhood vaccines. For more information, visit [beyfortus.com](http://beyfortus.com).

Additionally, the RSV vaccine ABRYSVO is recommended for pregnant women during weeks 32 through 36 of pregnancy. An RSV vaccine is also recommended for adults 75 years of age and older, as well as those aged 60 to 74 who are at increased risk for severe RSV. The vaccine has proven effective in reducing RSV transmission and preventing severe illness, particularly in vulnerable populations, including McHenry County’s elderly. For more information, visit [abrysvo.com](http://abrysvo.com).

The McHenry County Department of Health continues to actively monitor RSV trends throughout the season and urges all eligible residents to get vaccinated and take preventive measures to protect themselves and others.

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## Mark your calendars for Volo Bog's Winterfest event on Jan. 12

Looking for a cure for Cabin Fever? Plan to attend Volo Bog State Natural Area's Annual WinterFest on Sunday, Jan. 12 from 1-4 p.m. It is the perfect blend of indoor and outdoor activities to remedy those mid-winter doldrums!

**Indoor Activities:**  
**Live Music: Irish Stew 1, 2 & 3 p.m. (45 minute sets)**

The musicians of Irish Stew have played together for many years. Formerly known as the Bridgeport Ramblers, Irish Stew is a leading Irish traditional music band known throughout Lake and McHenry Counties.

With a repertoire ranging from traditional Irish reels, jigs and other Irish dance tunes to Irish and contemporary songs, Irish Stew offers music sure to make us move.

Among the many venues the band has played the main stages at Dirty Nellie's Pub and Mickey Finn's Brewery on St. Patrick's Day, the McHenry Outdoor Theater, Trinity School of Irish Dance Big Jig, O'Hare School of Irish Dance annual event, Fox Lake Friday Night Concerts, Kelsey Roadhouse, the Cottage, Rivalry Alehouse, Black Lung Brewery, Toadstool Pub, and O'Toole's. And now they can brag, Volo Bog!

**Photo Contest Awards**  
Between music sets photo contest awards will be presented for Volo Bog's 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Nature Photo Contest.

- 1:45 – Color plant, Beyond the Midwest, Animals B&W Plants & Landscape
- 2:45 – Color Birds, B&W Animals, Color Invertebrates, Color Vertebrates, Beyond Midwest/Plants & Landscape
- 3:45 – Best of Show, People's Choice & Judges Award  
Snow Sculpting Awards

**Outdoor Activities:**  
**Bog Tours:** Volo Bog is beautiful any time of year and all the more magical under a blanket of snow. Bog tours will be available throughout the afternoon.

**Snow Sculpting Contest:**  
If snow is packable, children and adults alike are invited to enter the snow sculpting contest. There are prizes in four categories – Youth, Teen, Family & Adult.

Cross country skiing, snowshoeing and hiking will also be available.

**Donations Appreciated**  
Friends of Volo Bog, a 501(c)(3) membership organization, happily accept donations to support this and other programs at Volo Bog State Natural Area. Suggested cover - \$10/ adult; children free.

Volo Bog State Natural Area is an Illinois Department of Natural Resources site located at 28478 W. Brandenburg Road, Ingleside, IL 60041. Contact the site at [dnr.volobog@illinois.gov](mailto:dnr.volobog@illinois.gov) or 815-344-1294.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN

Centennial Park in the Village of Antioch will be getting a renovation thanks to a \$600,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Resources.

## Christmas came early to the Village of Antioch \$600,000 grant awarded for Centennial Park renovation

Christmas came early this week for the Village of Antioch as the Illinois Department of Natural Resources awarded the community a \$600,000 grant for the renovation of Centennial Park. This significant investment marks a milestone in Antioch's ongoing commitment to enhancing its infrastructure and preserving spaces that bring the community together.

The matching grant was made possible by the Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) program, which makes up part of the more than \$55.2 million awarded to help communities throughout Illinois with land acquisition, park development, and other outdoor recreation projects. The OSLAD program has awarded \$640 million for park projects throughout Illinois since 1986.

Centennial Park holds a special place in the heart of the Village. Built

in 1992, the 7.93-acre park was a true community effort—designed and constructed with the help of the families and children who would come to enjoy it. Now, more than 30 years later, the renovation will ensure Centennial Park remains a cherished gathering place for generations to come.

"We are thrilled to receive this grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources," Mayor Scott Gartner said. "Centennial Park is a cornerstone of our community, and this funding represents a meaningful step in our ongoing efforts to invest in Antioch's infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for our residents."

The \$600,000 matching grant will be used to revitalize Centennial Park, updating its facilities, improving accessibility, and ensuring it meets the needs of today's families while

honoring the park's legacy. Other improvements include a new shelter, as well as updates to the park's tennis courts, trails, signage, landscaping, and more. The project is not expected to begin until 2026.

From its inception, Centennial Park has been more than just a playground—it has been a symbol of what can be accomplished when a community works together, Assistant Village Administrator Jim Moran said.

"These improvements intend to provide updated, full accessible, and expended offerings to Antioch residents based off community feedback," he said. "As the Village of Antioch looks ahead to the park's transformation, this grant serves as a testament to the community's dedication to creating spaces that foster connection, recreation, and pride."

## Illinois' minimum wage increases, completing 6-year transition

2019 law was Pritzker's first major legislative victory

By Ben Szalinski  
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

The minimum wage in Illinois increased to \$15 an hour

on Jan. 1, completing a six-year transition period since the increase was approved in 2019.

Beginning New Year's Day, Illinois workers making minimum wage will see wages rise by \$1 and tipped workers will see their paychecks bump to \$9 an hour. Youth workers under 18 who work

fewer than 650 hours a year will have a \$13 minimum wage.

The final increase, ending a six-year ramp which began with the minimum wage rising from \$8.25 to \$9.25 on Jan. 1, 2020, puts a bow on Gov. JB Pritzker's first major legislative victory. He signed the wage increase in February

2019 about a month after being sworn in for his first term, checking off a top campaign promise.

"Since day one of my administration, I've made it my mission to build an economy that works for everyone and raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour fulfills that promise to our working families," Pritzker said in a statement. "This increase honors the

workers who power our state and ensures they can better support their families, bringing us closer to a stronger, more equitable economy for all."

Illinois will be one of 10 states with a minimum wage of \$15 or greater, according to the National Employment Law Project. Twenty-two other states are also increasing their wages on Jan. 1.

The minimum wage increase is one of many economic changes that have happened since 2019, including effects of the pandemic, Illinois Chamber of Commerce CEO Lou Sandoval told Capitol News Illinois. He said those have caused businesses to adjust their operations in a variety of ways, such as increasing automation.

"I think you're starting to see businesses pivot in terms of how they're adjusting," Sandoval said. "You're seeing this at the national chains." Some restaurants, for example, are "moving away from larger sit-down areas into grab-and-go."

Illinois job growth has been slow since October 2019, according to a November report by the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability. The state has seen a net increase of 28,700 jobs from October 2019 through October 2024. That's a growth rate of 0.5 percent, compared to the national rate of 4.9 percent.

The rate of new job postings by businesses at the beginning of the year will shed some light on how the jump to \$15 on Jan. 1 is impacting business operations, Sandoval said.

To help small businesses with the change, the state provides a tax credit through 2027 to businesses with 50 or fewer employees for wages paid to minimum-wage workers.

## 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.

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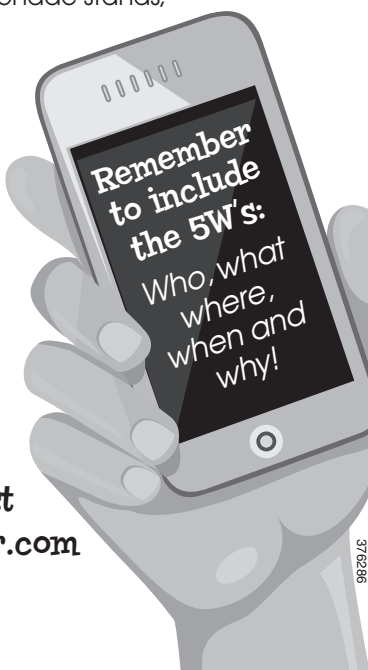
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E-mail your photos at the highest possible resolution to: [news@hi-liter.com](mailto:news@hi-liter.com)  
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# ROE to host free virtual cybersecurity course for parents

The McHenry County Regional Office of Education is offering a free virtual class to educate parents about how to keep their children safe when it comes to technology.

The Cyber Guide for Parents course takes place from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 15, and is being offered in both English and Spanish;

the Zoom link for English is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88940522652>, and the Zoom link for Spanish is <https://bit.ly/3D1aifC>.

The course will be taught by Richard Wistocki, a child crime expert and retired police detective with more than 30 years of law enforcement experience, 22 of them as an internet crimes investigator

with the Naperville Police Department. He was one of the founding members of the Illinois Attorney General's Crimes Against Children Task Force and a member of the US Secret Service Computer Crimes Task Force; he also has authored Illinois laws regarding sexting and sexual exploitation of children. Wistocki is president

of BeSure Consulting, which specializes in educating parents and students about online safety.

"Technology and the internet are now an inseparable part of children's lives – but while it presents tremendous opportunity, there are dangerous people who can, and do, use it to target them," Regional Superin-

tendent of Schools Diana Hartmann said. "The free course we're offering, from one of the foremost experts in the field, will help parents protect their children online."













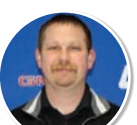



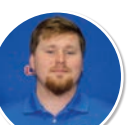



Topics that the presentation will cover include cyber-bullying, understanding your child's phone apps, internet predators, the dan-

gers of online gaming, the dangers of posting photos and videos to social media, file sharing, sexting, how to control and monitor computers and smart phones, and how to have technology talks with children.

For more information, call 815-334-4475, or email [DKHartmann@mchenry-countyil.gov](mailto:DKHartmann@mchenry-countyil.gov).

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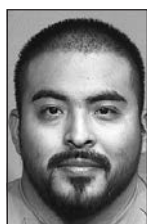


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**Court & crime news**

# Man sentenced to 8 years for child pornography, grooming



**Victor Meza Valdez**

The Office of the McHenry County State's Attorney, announces that Victor Meza Valdez, formerly of Ringwood, New Jersey, was sentenced to a combined sentence of 8 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections for the offenses of child pornography and grooming pursuant to a negotiated plea in front of the Honorable Tiffany Davis on December 17.

On January 9, 2024, the Lake in the Hills Police Department began investigating a report made by a student at a local middle school involving a 26-year-old adult male contacting the student via Snapchat. The Lake in the Hills Police Department identified the minor victim and discovered a second minor victim at a local Huntley middle school. The Huntley Police Department referred their investigation to the McHenry County State's Attorney's Office Crimes Against Children Task Force. The Task Force was able to build on the thorough investigation done by Detective Arient from Lake in the Hills PD to ultimately identify Victor Meza Valdez as the adult male that had been contacting the two minor children.

Once identified, the Task Force issued various subpoenas to cell phone providers and social media providers, gathering the evidence proving that Meza Valdez targeted the young girls via social media, grooming them to send photos and coercing them to virtually engage in various sexual acts. The Task Force was able to work quickly with local New Jersey law enforcement to locate and apprehend Meza Valdez, bringing him back to McHenry County to be prosecuted.

Ultimately, Valdez Meza plead guilty to soliciting child pornography, a class X felony, and was sentenced to 6 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections. Valdez Meza

also plead guilty to grooming, a class 4 felony, and was sentenced to 2 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections, to be served consecutively to the sentence on solicitation of child pornography. Valdez Meza is entitled to day-for-day credit on both charges. Valdez Meza will have to register as a sex offender for life.

Randi Freese would like to thank the hard work of Lake in the Hills Police Department Det. Arient, who provided invaluable information to the McHenry County State's Attorney's Office Crimes Against Children Task Force to bring justice to these young victims. The case was prosecuted by Assistant State's Attorney Elizabeth Vonau.

Since its inception in 2023, the Task Force has partnered with local law enforcement agencies in McHenry County to investigate over 55 cases of children sexual and physical abuse allegations, leading to charges such as these that reinforce the McHenry County State's Attorney's Office's commitment to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community – our children.

### Passenger dies after vehicle slams into home

Lake County Sheriff's Crash Investigators are investigating a Christmas Eve crash that left one man dead.

On December 24, at approximately 7:25 p.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies responded to reports of a car that drove into a home in the 21300 block of West Engle Drive, Unincorporated Lake Villa. Sheriff's deputies arrived and located a Jeep and a home with major damage.

A preliminary investigation shows the driver of the Jeep, Marcos Corona-Vargas, 31, of the 1600 block of East End Avenue, Round Lake Beach, was traveling eastbound on West Engle Drive. According to witnesses, Marcos-Vargas crossed into the westbound lane of traffic and then back into the eastbound lane. Marcos-Vargas then drove off the roadway on the south side, into a yard, and the Jeep slammed into a home. Fortunately, the home was

unoccupied at the time of the crash.

A 22-year-old man of Round Lake Beach, who was sitting in the front seat of the Jeep, was critically injured and subsequently pronounced deceased at the scene. Another 22-year-old man of Round Lake Beach, who was sitting in one of the back seats, was seriously injured and transported to an area hospital for treatment. Corona-Vargas sustained serious injuries and was transported to an area hospital for treatment.

Sheriff's traffic crash investigators determined Corona-Vargas was driving under the influence of alcohol at the time of the crash. The Lake County State's Attorney's Office reviewed the initial facts of the incident and approved the charges of reckless homicide and DUI against Corona-Vargas. Upon the completion of his medical treatment, he will be released into the custody of the Lake County Sheriff's Office and transported to the Lake County Jail.

The Lake County Coroner's Office responded to the scene and an autopsy on the deceased passenger is being scheduled. The crash remains under investigation by the Lake County Sheriff's Office Technical Crash Investigation Team.

### K9 Grip and K9 Tera assist in locating devices in child pornography arrest

On December 19, the Lake County State's Attorney's Office (LCSAO) Cyber Crimes Division and the Lake County Sheriff's Office (LCSO), with the assistance of the Illinois Attorney General's Office and Waukegan Police Department, arrested Jose Paz-Hernandez, 22, for possessing and manufacturing child pornography.

The LCSAO Investigators and Sheriff's Investigators conducted an investigation after receiving a cyber tip that child pornography was being uploaded to an online cloud storage from Paz-Hernandez's residence in the 3000 block of Kathe Lane in Waukegan.

LCSAO Electronic Storage Detection (ESD) K9 Grip,

and LCSO K9 Tera, assisted during the search and helped locate electronic devices.

After seizing Paz-Hernandez's electronic devices, the LCSAO Cyber Lab conducted an analysis on the devices and discovered several files of child sexual abuse material on Paz-Hernandez's computer and an online storage account.

The LCSAO approved 10 counts of Child Pornography (Class 2 Felony) and filed a Petition to Detain Paz-Hernandez pending the disposition of the case. Additional charges may be filed pending the completion of the forensic analysis.

"With new technology and a dedicated team in our office, the Lake County Sheriff's Office, and alongside all our law enforcement partners, we will locate and apprehend those who threaten the safety of our children and our community. Our prosecutors will hold them accountable in the courtroom," said Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart.

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "This arrest highlights the exceptional work of our detectives and the critical collaboration between the Lake County Sheriff's Office, the Lake County State's Attorney's Office, and the Illinois Attorney General's Office. By combining our resources, including our sheriff's electronics detection canine, K9 Tera (byte), we are unwavering in our commitment to identifying and apprehending individuals who exploit and harm children. We will always invest our resources on protecting the most vulnerable members of our community."

At the time of his arrest, Paz-Hernandez had recently been charged with Aggravated Criminal Sexual Abuse, a Class 2 felony, in two separate cases. He was released on pre-trial conditions after a judge denied the State's petition to detain him on December 12, 2024.

The State filed a Petition to Detain Paz-Hernandez pending the disposition of this case and a motion to revoke his pre-trial release on the other two pending cases.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN

**Teams check in at the Lake County Central Permit Facility in Libertyville the night of the PIT Count. Dozens of volunteers participate each year. For more information or to sign up visit lakecountyhomeless.org.**

## Volunteers needed for Homeless Point in Time count

Join the fight to help end homelessness by participating in the Lake County 2025 Point In Time (PIT) Count. Volunteers are needed the night of Wednesday, Jan. 29 to search across Lake County to interview, count, and offer assistance to unsheltered homeless people experiencing homelessness.

The data gathered during the PIT Count will capture a picture of what homelessness looks like on any given day,

help coordinate services for people experiencing homelessness and provide organizations with the information needed to work towards the goal of ending homelessness in Lake County.

Volunteers can create their own teams of two to five people or volunteer as an individual and be paired up with a team. All volunteers must be over the age of 18 and attend a virtual training.

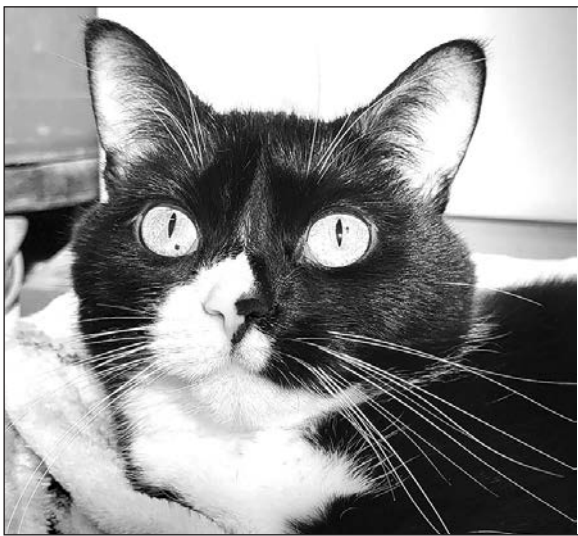
To sign up to volunteer in this year's count visit lakecountyhomeless.org.

## Keltner annual blood drive set for January 11

The annual Jake Keltner Memorial Blood Drive is returning for a sixth year to give people the opportunity to honor a fallen hero by giving the gift of life.

The drive takes place from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 11 at Sage YMCA, 701 Manor Road, Crystal Lake.

Sign up for a donation time by visiting [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) sponsor code: Keltner.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN

## Pet of the week

**Femputer, is about 8-1/2 years old, spayed, up-to-date on shots (incl. rabies), tested negative for feline leukemia, FIV and heartworm 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).**

## Snowmobile safety education course offered Jan. 18

Illinois winters can create great snowmobiling conditions. Join the Forest Preserves Ranger Police for a snowmobile safety course from 8 am to 5 pm Saturday, Jan. 18, at the Operations and Public Safety Facility, 19808 W. Grand Ave., Lake Villa. Learn safety basics and respect for others and the environment to keep snowmobiling fun for all.

The program is primarily designed to train ages 12 and older but is open to participants of all ages. Parents and guardians are invited to join as

well.

Registration is required. To secure your spot, call 847-968-3404 from 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekdays. The course is free. Participants are asked to bring their own lunch.

Participants 12 and older who successfully complete the course by fulfilling the minimum eight hours of instruction and pass the final examination on the same day will be awarded a State of Illinois Certificate of Competency, granting them the authority to independently operate a snowmobile.

Students under 11 may participate in the class but cannot take the exam to receive certification until they are 12. Students between 11 and 12 will receive their certificate upon their 12<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### Who Must Take the Course?

Illinois law states that individuals 12 to 15 may operate a snowmobile only if:

1. They have a valid Snowmobile Safety Education Certificate of Competency issued by the Illinois Department of

Natural Resources, Safety Education Section.

2. Those aged 10 to 11 may operate one only under the direct supervision of a parent, guardian, or someone at least 16 years old designated by a parent or guardian. Children under 10 are not allowed to operate a snowmobile.

Visit the Illinois Department of Natural Resources online at <https://dnr.illinois.gov/safety/snowmobilesafety.html> for more information about Snowmobile Safety Education.

**Crime victim DNA:** DNA evidence collected from a person who is the victim of a crime to aid a criminal investigation cannot be entered into a DNA database, according to House Bill 1168.

## • New laws (Continued from page 3)

### Other new laws

**NIL money:** Student athletes at NCAA universities can earn name, image and likeness money directly from their universities. House Bill 307 was an initiative of the University of Illinois.

**Hearing aids:** Insurance providers must cover medically prescribed hearing aids

for all people under House Bill 2443. Coverage was previously only required for those under 18.

**Gym memberships:** House Bill 4911 requires gyms and fitness centers to accept multiple ways for people to cancel their membership. Physical fitness locations also must now allow customers to

cancel their membership by email or online. Customers will also be allowed to submit written notice for canceling their membership by mail.

**Subscription renewals:** Businesses that offer a free trial or promotional period for their product or service must notify customers at least three days before the subscription

automatically renews at a paid rate under Senate Bill 2764. The law only applies to subscriptions longer than 15 days.

**Crime victim DNA:** DNA evidence collected from a person who is the victim of a crime to aid a criminal investigation cannot be entered into a DNA database, according to House Bill 1168.

# Lake County Sheriff's arrest bulletin

**Nov. 22**  
Amy L. Hughes, 39, Beach Park, was cited for driving while license suspended, suspended registration and no insurance;  
Salvador Ramirez, 37, no permanent address, was cited for battery;  
Cornell Hutchins, 29, Beach Park, was cited for battery;

**Nov. 23**  
John C. Warner, 52, Lake Villa, was cited for domestic battery;

**Nov. 24**  
William A. Johnson, 56, Zion, was cited for no driver's license;  
Jose Elias-Suarez, 29, Waukegan, was cited for no driver's license and no insurance;  
Jorge D. Sanchez-Angeles, 28, Round Lake Park, was cited for DUI – alcohol, endangering the life of a child and no insurance;  
Juvenile, was cited for improper transportation of cannabis, and underage possession of cannabis;  
Mike P. Harrison, 61, Waukegan, was cited for driving while license revoked and no insurance;

**Nov. 25**  
Jordan Waldron, 27, Lake Villa, was cited for a warrant obtained: unlawful use of a credit card, and identity theft;  
Jeffrey Tarpen, 39, Lake Villa, was cited for a warrant obtained: unlawful use of a credit card, and identity theft;  
Derrick S. Sanford, 35, no

permanent address, was cited for battery;  
Tonee D. Mshkoo, 46, Lincolnshire, was cited for a warrant obtained: theft;  
Anthony M. Briones, 29, Gurnee, was cited for domestic battery;  
Jeffrey R. Tarpen, 39, Lake Villa, was cited for possession of a fraudulent ID and a warrant arrest: unlawful use of a credit card and identity theft;  
Jordan Waldron, 27, Lake Villa, was cited for possession of meth, possession of a fraudulent ID and a warrant arrest: unlawful use of a credit card and identity theft;

**Nov. 26**  
Ignacio Tinajero Cruz, 21, Beach Park, was cited for criminal sexual abuse;  
Andrea Tinajero Cruz, 23, Beach Park, was cited for domestic battery;

**Nov. 27**  
Shania S. Brown, 25, Chicago, was cited for retail theft, and resisting a peace officer;  
Jonah D. Markowitz, 42, Cary, was cited for DUI – alcohol;  
Jesus Bautista Lopez, 25, Palatine, was cited for DUI – alcohol;  
Willie L. Wright, 53, no permanent address;  
Jack Z. Fitch, 21, Ingle-side, was cited for domestic battery;

**Nov. 28**  
Terrence P. Nelson, 34, Barrington, was cited for domestic battery;  
Alden S. Blaue, 35, Oak Park, was cited for DUI – al-

cohol;

**Nov. 29**  
Demetrius G. Marsh, 34, Zion, was cited for no driver's license;  
Omar Kamil Mahmoud, 20, Milwaukee, WI, was cited for aggravated speeding (96 mph in 55 mph zone);  
Kasey W. Coble, 39, Spring Grove, was cited for a warrant arrest: violating an order of protection;

**Dec. 1**  
Borislav A. Borisov, 56, Shorewood, WI, was cited for driving while license suspended and no insurance;

**Dec. 2**  
Autustus G. McKinnie, 44, Racine, WI, was cited for a warrant arrest: retail theft;  
Prince L. Pringle, 39, Waukegan, was cited for a warrant arrest: obstructing identification;  
Emily Hagen, 23, Belvidere, was cited for DUI – alcohol, and leaving the scene of an accident;

**Dec. 3**  
Leroy R. Bracey, 39, Chicago, was cited for a warrant arrest: obstructing identification;  
Taris M. Stokes, 59, Waukegan, was cited for a warrant arrest: criminal trespass to property;

**Dec. 4**  
Kristine M. Neikirk, 53, Morris, was cited for a warrant obtained: identity theft, theft and forgery;

**Dec. 5**  
Eduardo Talavera, 39, Lake in the Hills, was cited for a warrant obtained: retail theft;  
Gilberto Majarro-Garcia, 37, Lake Villa, was cited for a warrant obtained: burglary;  
Urbano Antunez, 30, Highwood, was cited for a warrant arrest: criminal damage to property;  
Luis V. Sanchez, 59, North Chicago, was cited for a warrant arrest: aggravated battery;  
Rikelmer J. Alarcon-Rueda, 19, North Chicago, was cited for no driver's license;  
Arturo Ibarra Garcia, 34, Beach Park, was cited for disorderly conduct, misuse of 911;  
Aphiwe S. Shabalala, 20, Round Lake Beach, was cited for driving while license suspended, and improper transportation of cannabis;

**Dec. 6**  
Jakira A. Burden, 23, Ingle-side, was cited for a warrant obtained: assault, and disorderly conduct;  
Fredericks K. Fitzgerald, 34, Houston, TX, was cited for battery;

**Dec. 7**  
Cedric D. Brown, 33, Waukegan, was cited for a warrant arrest: driving while license suspended;  
Daniel D. Tuholski, 45, Lake Bluff, was cited for battery;  
Allison M. Mainhart, 33, Palatine, was cited for a warrant arrest: operating watercraft under the influence of alcohol.

# • Minimum wage

(Continued from page 4)

The 2019 minimum wage law marked the first increase since the wage hit \$8.25 in 2010. Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford, D-Westchester, introduced a bill to raise it to \$15 an hour in 2017 that was passed by the General Assembly and vetoed by Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner. Lightford sponsored the initiative again in 2019.

"As a state, we have helped countless workers make ends meet, reduce financial stress, and provide a more solid foundation for their futures," Lightford said in a statement. "The \$15 minimum wage is a testament to our commitment to economic justice and our belief that everyone who works full time deserves a living wage."

The value of a \$15 minimum wage, however, has changed since lawmakers acted in 2019. A person making \$8.25 in February 2019 would need to earn \$10.30 today to have the same buying power after inflation, according to the Consumer Price Index. A \$15 hourly wage today has the buying power that \$12.02 had in February 2019. A person would need to make an \$18.72 wage today to have the same buying power that \$15 had in February 2019. Top Democrats didn't say if they will push for new increases.

"As a Senator of 25 years, history has shown my commitment of fighting to ensure workers are paid a living wage. That commitment still holds strong today," Lightford said in an email statement.

Pritzker said he supports ideas that will help workers make more money, but didn't

commit to supporting any plan to raise the minimum wage further when pressed about it at a news conference Dec. 11.

"We always are thinking about how do you balance the need for higher wages with the needs that businesses have to hire people and do it affordably. But I think we did it the right way when we did it back in 2019," Pritzker said.

The new \$15 wage equates to a 40-hour-per-week annual salary of \$31,200 before taxes. That equals the federal government's poverty level for a four-person household. The poverty level is \$15,060 in a single-person household.

But according to calculations in a national project by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, \$15 hourly still doesn't equate to a "living" wage in Illinois, based on U.S. Census Bureau cost of living and other cost estimates provided by federal agencies adjusted for inflation.

A single adult with no children needs a \$22.86 hourly salary to make a living wage in Illinois, while a two-parent household with two working adults and three children would each need to earn \$31.69. In a two-parent household with one working adult and one child, the worker needs \$36.49 to make a living wage, according to the MIT project.

Inflation is making it hard for workers to benefit from wage increases, Sandoval said, adding rising wages also cause businesses to raise prices.

"They might get the wage increase on one side, but their cost of living goes up accordingly," Sandoval said.

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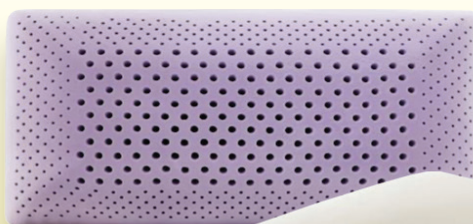
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